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Frontispiece SOME ARISTOCRATS AMONGST CAMELS

THE HEART OF THE ORIENT

Saunterings through Georgia, Armenia, Persia Turkomania, and Turkestan, to the Vale of Paradise

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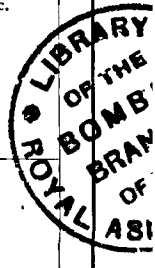
BY

MICHAEL MYERS SHOEMAKER

Author of "Islands of the Southern Seas," "The Great Siberian Railway," "Palaces and Prisons of Mary Queen of Scots," etc.

ILLUSTRATED

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MICHAEL MYERS SHOEMAKER

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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

TO MY SISTER

HENRIETTA



PREFACE

THE winter of 1902 found me turning once more towards those ever enchanting Eastern lands around the Caspian Sea. From Constantinople I passed through the quaint and curious kingdom of Georgia, now a part of the Russian Empire. Thence through Northern Persia and Central Asia, and then northward to begin the long journey to Peking, but that, belongs already [1] to another book. The following pages and pictures are descriptive of the heart of the Orient, and of Russia's place therein, from high life at the Persian Court to low life in the tents of the Kirghiz, where the camels whispered bits of gossip from Ispahan and Bactra, and the donkeys still dream of the flight into Egypt. In the central Asian section I have ventured to include descriptions of a tarantass journey of some few years ago, taken from a book of notes brought out at the time. That vehicle of torture has vanished from the main routes, but from it the traveller spied out the land and its people as he will never do again, now that the twentieth century has rolled its ribbons of steel into the farthest deserts of Asia. Therefore I trust that I may be pardoned for having

[1] See *Great Siberian Railway.*

reproduced my own experiences in that famous and purely Russian vehicle. Furthermore, I have nothing to say. If you are interested judge for yourself.

M. M. S.

December, 1903.





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THE HEART OF THE ORIENT

CHAPTER I

THE PORTAL OF THE ORIENT

CONSTANTINOPLE.

THOSE who retain the memory of this Ottoman capital as it was twenty years since should keep that memory green and not destroy it by a visit to the city as it now exists. The change is great, and, for the lover of the picturesque, most deplorable. From the sea, Constantinople presents the same splendid appearance as of yore, and travellers are led to suppose that they will again see the delightful city of their memory. But as they land at Pera and pass up the old, familiar streets, once sacred to donkeys and sedan-chairs, they notice that the latter have vanished, and the former slink by as though under interdiction. Smart victorias roll along and tram-cars jingle their bells through the narrow thoroughfares. There is an inclined plane

that carries one quickly to the heights above, and during the progress affords a glimpse now and then of the street of steps, down which, in the old days, you have made your stately progress in a sedan-chair, or on a gaily caparisoned horse. Once on the hill one finds Galata about as it used to be, save for some comfortable hotels, to which one does not object, and some blocks of fine buildings. Across from my window is a summer garden, where, of old, Turkish tombstones raised their stone turbans and fezes. Many of them, I notice, are being used for hitching-posts, and many of the stately cypress trees are gone. But the view from my window is as enchanting as ever. There is the inner Golden Horn with its fleet of war ships; there is the long bridge of boats to Stamboul, and beyond rise the domes and minarets of the Mussulman quarter. As one descends for a visit, however, one notices on the bridge of boats a strange absence of colour, a certain drabness that grates upon the eye, and at last discovers that the turbans and brilliant Turkish dresses of both men and women have vanished. The crowds are dressed in "Cheap John" English clothes, with no jot of colour save a fez now and then. Gone are the balloon dresses of the women, almost vanished are the yashmaks, and as the carriages roll by the faces in them are more plainly to be seen than in a European town. There is no shadow of the days of yore left in the costumes of the people. I confess that it is in a disheartened condition that I pass slowly onward. Still the domes of St. Sophia rise over there. Surely the old temple cannot have changed with the rest. It is useless to go "bazaar-

wards," as they have been ruined by the earthquakes, have lost their old-time charm, and will never again possess it. All the old shadowy corners, with their gleam of silver and gold, their faint odour of sandalwood and attar of roses, are gone, as are the bevies of laughing, chattering, darkly veiled women that were wont to follow one around. Every thing is new there now and so one goes by in silence, and on and up through the dusty streets, to what I remember as a bower of beauty—the old Seraglio, a place where the cypress and myrtle mingled their fragrance with the salt of the blue waters murmuring around them—a garden of delight. Pity I had not retained my memories, but the "now" and "then" are so very different that perhaps the recollections of the latter may survive the shock of the former. The "Sublime Porte" is dilapidated and dirty, and now gives entrance to a new government building. Through what were the shades of these gardens where, of old, Sultanas wandered, the Oriental Express passes, shrieking wildly; and when I ask my guide, "Where are the ruins of that marble chute down which plunged the victims of the Sultans?" he stares in wonder and points with pride to the painted railway station. What stupid fools these Turks are, to destroy that which drew thousands to their city! As Dom Pedro said of the monks of Cordova: "They have done what any one could do, but they have destroyed what was unique in the world." But enough; let us pass under the dim portals of the church of Constantine. This, is as we knew it; this, is as we left it; this, has escaped the destroying tooth of change and time. The very

rugs, as they slant across the pavements in order to face the Holy of Holies at Mecca, bring back each and every face to my memory which I saw when I trod them years ago, while the silence and sacredness of the old temple penetrate and calm one's soul. Through the dim light flutter stray pigeons, and from the base of a column which once was a support for the temple of Diana at Ephesus, comes the droning voice of an old Turk reciting the Koran for the benefit of his soul. Over all rises the marvellous dome, and off in an eastern nook, still to be seen, though more faintly now than of yore, is the outline of the Virgin's figure, lasting through all the centuries, and being the only semblance of the human form to be found in St. Sophia. After all, there is but one St. Sophia, and no other temple on earth approaches it for impressiveness. Under its arches you will linger long, from its portals you will depart with regret, and wherever your footsteps may lead you in life's journey you will carry with you always a remembrance of its deep peace, its benediction of repose to soul and body. All the Christian world must sympathise with the desires of the Greek Church to possess this "Mecca" of her faith; to sweep for ever from St. Sophia the taint of Mohammed; to raise aloft the cross of Christ after its banishment of a thousand years; to unveil for ever more the face of the mother of God.



CHAPTER II

CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE BLACK SEA

CONSTANTINOPLE in the mists of spring is like Simla in the rains—a good place to remain indoors, and therefore the Turkish room of the "Pera Palace" is crowded with all sorts and conditions of people to-night. Being alone, I listen to the hum of conversation, broken words and sentences calling to my mind pictures of almost every quarter of this globe of ours. There are a few French and Italians, and the usual number of American tourists, out for the first time, and busy with the sights of the city. Through the smoke-laden atmosphere comes a bit of Spanish intermixed with some guttural German, a mention of Damascus, and the new dam at Assuan, the Darling Downs of Australia or that Eastern land, Persia, towards which I am bound.

Drifting into conversation with an Englishman next to me, Major D., I discovered that we had met long since on the China Sea and swapped yarns before an open coal fire aboard the *Ballaratt*, the only ship, by the way, upon which I ever saw such a thing, but it was most comfortable on that occasion.

Major D. is bound for Peking *via* Central Asia and Siberia. He has crossed that vast continent several times, and really seems to enjoy such spots as the Gobi Desert and Famished Steppe.

I have noticed that the greatest travellers are apt to be mere wisps of men as to weight. This one is tall and thin as a shadow. He was shot through the body at Tien-tsin very much as our late President was at Buffalo, but this man lives to tell the tale, and can stand a journey to Way-hi-way, overland, the mere thought of which makes one gasp, that is, one who has had anything to do with Asian travel or in a degree appreciates the limitless deserts over which this delicate man must pass,—hundreds of miles in that Russian abomination, the tarantass, many more hundreds by sledge and river and on horses; days, weeks, months of solitude, with none to turn to in storm or sun, sickness or health, save some wretched natives, all of whom hope for one's death in order to divide one's travelling kit and raiment amongst them, or to quarrel and fight over them until perhaps all are dead.

I am *en route* to Persia or any other place toward which the spirit moves me, and word comes that two men from here, one English and one of my own country, will start to-morrow on a tank-ship for Batoum. If I would join them,—a subject upon which I make prompt decision,—I must move quickly, as there is much to be done. However, the will finds the way, and by noon next day I am moving swiftly down the hills of Galata with bag and baggage, camp-beds, and a cook, piled up in two carriages. How vile the streets are! One can-

not but wish that Russia could obtain possession of this place. Its existence as one sees it to-day is a disgrace to the continent of Europe. The filth is appalling, while these thousands of wretched pariah dogs carry contagion everywhere and certainly render progress through these streets dangerous. As we fly along one of the brutes bites a lad in the leg, and these people simply laugh at the poor child.

It is impossible to change the natures of these dogs. You may carry off the youngest pup, keep him away for years, but bring him back here and he will vanish like a shadow and return to the habits of his breed,—*i. e.*, quarrelling and fighting all night and sleeping all day, always in one's way, always horrible and loathsome.

For the first time in days the mists lift as we reach the custom house, and brilliant sunshine makes the departure more cheerful than it would have proven earlier in the day.

The usual bribery to the custom officers, the usual row with land porters and debates with boatmen, are over and done with and we move off towards our ship anchored far up the Bosphorus. The barking of those miserable dogs grows fainter as we pass outward, and save for an occasional one on a Turkish boat, soon ceases entirely.

These native boatmen possess neither horns nor bells and in thick weather make their presence known to passing ships by beating their dog and thereby forcing him to keep up an almost constant chorus of barks. For once I hold no sympathy with an abused beast.

The curs in the city yonder divide the place into

squares and streets. Each section has its own particular drove of this kind, and woe betide an intruder! His presence will be at once noted by some small pup, who promptly advises the fighters of the pack, and the intruder's fate is settled if he does not beat a speedy retreat. But we are well away from them by now and our boat is gliding past the bridge of boats and on into the Bosphorus.

My two companions, having preceded me, are by now on the ship. My boat pauses a moment in the outer harbour for inspection of passport, and then glides on and is soon under the stern of the *Conch*, upon which we shall sail to Batoum, at the extreme eastern end of the Black Sea. The *Conch* is a tank-ship and does not expect to carry passengers, but will do so now and then, by grace of the captain and the money payed him.

I confess that I am somewhat disheartened as I step on board. An officer meets me, asking in evident surprise, "Are you sailing with us, sir?" On my reply in the affirmative, I am shown aft, and in passing, note the greasy condition of ship and crew. How dirty it all seems! What a nasty place in which to pass three days! but no use growling: mistake, if mistake it be, is made and can't be corrected. Matters improve as I descend to the saloon, and on the whole it is well enough, though rough at all times. But an old traveller rarely grumbles, especially when he knows it will be wasted breath and energy. In the saloon I find the two men who are to be my companions until Teheran be reached, and perhaps much farther. The one is an American gentleman and so needs no further description, save

to say that he is young, and I promptly dub him "infant," the name he goes by from this time forth.

The other is from the English nation and Embassy. He has spent many years in this section, and as he is comparatively young also, will probably spend many more. He speaks eight or nine languages, and I am in luck to run across him, even if an American joke is somewhat beyond his comprehension. However, he will see it in time, and when he does he will laugh.

As to languages we discover that we three and my cook command the use of some fourteen, so we shall not be at a loss for words.

The Englishman, Mr. F., was in Armenia during the late horrors, and surely, from his account, the world of civilisation would be justified in sweeping the unspeakable "Turk," from the Sultan down, into the waters of the Black Sea.

Those atrocities, which made mankind shudder, were ordered directly from the Sultan: "Kill the infidel." Everything is slowly and cautiously prepared, and then they wait for some trivial pretext to begin operations.

In that case it was upon the Armenians.

He related one incident that should rouse the civilised world. The Gregorian Armenians of one town, Orfa, believing that their church would not be attacked, shut themselves up in the sacred edifice, carrying their money and jewels on their persons, but the church was no defence. The doors were broken open and all on the ground floor ruthlessly slaughtered. The galleries were crowded with women and children, who furnished excellent marks

for the murderers. Then, collecting matting and wood, upon which they sprinkled pepper and poured petroleum, they set fire to the whole, and the slaughter was shortly complete.

The next day the Jews were ordered in to bring out and bury the dead. Knowing of the stores of money and valuables upon the poor wretches, each Jew as he appeared with his burden was searched, and to secure his booty these Jews—forced into that work—dug holes in the corpses and hid the valuables therein. Then, when the dead reached the field of burial, the Jewish women—also forced into the work—secured the booty, and at last the dead were left in peace.

That is but a single instance of the horror with which this land has abounded, even of late years. We of the outer world have never known a hundredth part of the whole, and never will. When such a thing occurs, orders come from the very throne itself to keep quiet for a space, to say nothing, to do nothing, until Europe and America have quieted down a bit, until the nine days' indignation is over and done with, and our world has forgotten this in something new, and then to go ruthlessly onward. The Christian world must not believe that this work is over. It is going on right now, and other horrors worse than the last may break out at any moment, and will continue to occur, as surely as day succeeds night and as long as the Turks remain in power. All the hatred and fanaticism of the world from its foundation to the present time is nothing when compared to that of the Turkey and Persia of to-day.

But our captain has come on board with some boon companions, who, after a farewell glass or two, depart, and we are off.

From the water Constantinople is still one of the fairest visions of the earth, and just now the sunlight floods ruins, rocks, and river, and the Oriental city glitters like a gem in the sparkling waters. Stamboul, with its romantic Seraglio point, its many mosques and minarets, rises in the centre. To the left are the hills of Scutari, with their cypress trees, while the heights of Pera form the right wing of the picture, and a golden sky bends over all,—surely too fair a spot to be the abiding-place of much iniquity and nastiness.

As we sail up the Bosphorus the suburbs march along each shore in stately procession, until the castles of Asia and Europe block the way on either shore, but as we approach the Black Sea a dense mist comes in from the north, blotting out all the fairy vision and forcing us to anchor for the night.

Fortunately for us the wind later is from the south and off shore, and the Black Sea treats us quietly. A tempestuous voyage in an oil-tank like this would not be one of pleasure. The "infant" and the Englishman have the captain's cabin, and I sleep the first night on a divan in the saloon, the second in a stateroom from which the second engineer has been evicted, but nothing else, judging from the dirt and truck which bar my way to my bunk, but —no growls ensue, and I turn in for a long, dreamless sleep, broken only by a Chinaman about 3 A.M., who, taking me for the evicted man, tries to rout me out to duty.

A wild babel of voices awakens me long before I desire it, and I lie for awhile wondering where I am and what it means. Certainly the gang outside are not Russians, and are not afraid of expressing their opinions in, I should judge, fifty different languages. What a pretty picture is on view through my open port! Over the surface of the bright green water dozens of brilliantly painted boats glide hither and thither, each crowded with fantastically dressed boatmen and merchants, while beyond, scattered over the low mountain-sides, is a village (ending in a ruined castle). The air is laden with a jargon of tongues, and quivers with a jumble of colours. That is Kersakand. Feeling sure that distance lends enchantment to the view, we do not go ashore. The day does not justify exercise. So I spend it hanging over the ship's rail, trying to excite a score or more of boatmen to renewed quarrels. Judging by the noise, I am somewhat successful. How little things change in this part of the world! Here is a boat loaded with water-jars, just such as were used at the "marriage in Cana." A lot of old Turks have come on board, and are sitting in solemn, silent rows. No one has spoken to them, nor do they speak to each other. After awhile, in the same solemn silence, they depart. It is excitement for them, as, of course, with the absolute seclusion of their women, such a thing as society cannot exist at home. They will go back to the dead silence of their houses, varied only occasionally by the senseless chatter of the women, quarrelling probably about their last box of sweetmeats. There is here an effort to change the usual order of things. From

the centre of the town rises a great, new, white schoolhouse. But I fancy the apparent prosperity is all sham, as are most other things under the dominion of the Sultan.

Steaming eastward our next point is the old city of Trebizond. Its gaily painted houses are deeply embowered in stately cypress trees, while, far above all, the hills slumber in the morning light. Trebizond, from the sea, is most picturesque, though internally it is not very interesting. We are here but a few hours, sailing onward with the sunset.





CHAPTER III

BATOUM AND THE ENTRANCE TO GEORGIA

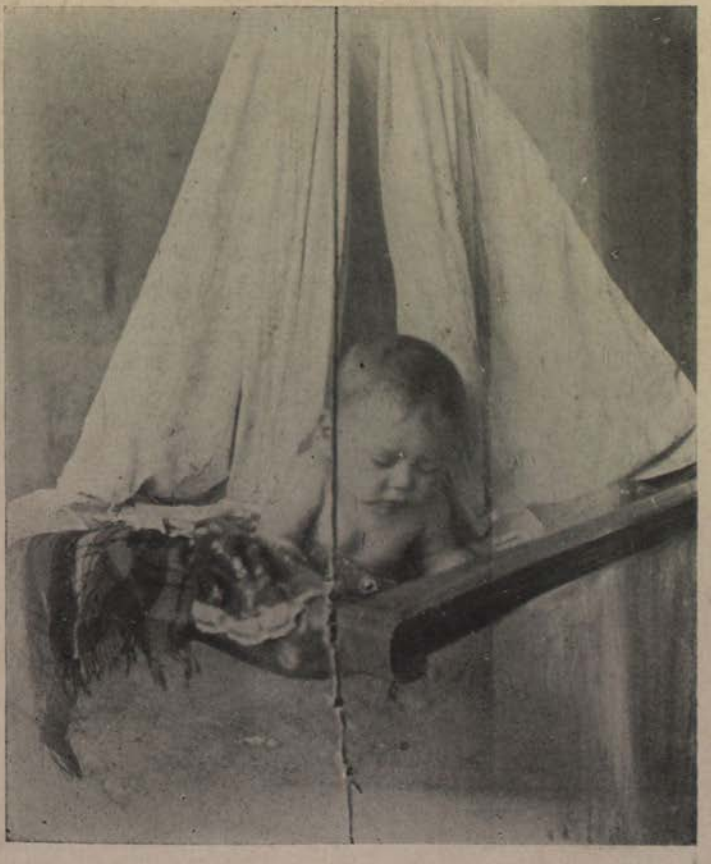
IN the early hours of the next day we anchor at Batoum. As this ship is not supposed to carry passengers we have been regularly "articled." I am down as a cook, at which the Russian doctor looks doubtful.

Here we find our first set of Russian officials. It rains, and the customs officers object to coming out to examine our luggage, and will not permit it to be taken off the ship, so hours pass and we roll around just outside the harbour.

When I last saw Batoum it was midsummer. Now her encircling mountains are shrouded in snow, and a mist shuts out town and harbour. Little can be seen from the deck of our ship, and we retire to the cabin to pass the time until we may land.

The storm keeps us on board until 3 P.M., when some small boats sent by the British and American consuls convey us to the custom house.

It is eight years since my last visit here, and the time rolls off as though it had never been, making me feel that I have never left the dominions of the Great White Czar. The same officers that seemed glad to be rid of me then welcome me now, and the



A CRADLE IN THE ORIENT

old rules and regulations fasten around me once more.

To an American the constant watching, the eternal espionage, is at first intolerable, but he soon learns to rest comfortably under it, knowing that he cannot disappear unless the government so wills it; that his absence for any time would be noted, and he would be hunted up. If murdered, woe betide his assassins; if up to work objectionable to Russia, woe betide himself. But, which ever way it turned, friends at home would be spared any lengthened suspense.

Russia's customs officers treat us gently, notwithstanding laws of a stringent character lately enacted. Our trunks and bundles are opened, but scarcely looked at. A small book of notes of my own on my former trans-Caspian tour is hastily hustled out of sight by the British consul, which amuses me, as I doubt Russia's caring at all what I might say about her. All goes well, and speedily we are rattling through the town, in a droshky which, as with all of its kind, threatens disintegration momentarily.

One does not realise the fatigue of an ocean voyage until it is over, and then the collapse comes. It came to us three promptly on entering the hotel, and I fear our consul must have considered us ungrateful for his kind attentions, but we were very weary.

That which to us in the far-off world is so unimportant immediately springs into prominence and becomes the almost sole topic when one enters the dominions of the Czar—viz., the ultimate fate of

his nation, of Turkey, and of all Northern Asia. Will Russia rule at Constantinople? Will she seize Afghanistan and Persia, as well as Asia Minor and Arabia? What will she do in the Far East? How does she look upon this German enterprise of a railway from the Golden Horn to the Persian Gulf? What will England do? And last, but not least, as one enters the portals of this Empire one hears the mutterings of her people. Russia can generally suppress all news of her domestic troubles, but now and then the traveller hears of what is going on within her borders, and he cannot but wonder as to whether she is or is not to be subjected to such a revolution as that of France in 1792. Lately, and for the first time, has been raised the cry of "Down with the Romanoffs!—down with the Czar!" Imagine that in Russia!

At Kief—not long since—occurred an insurrection in which some two hundred were killed, thirty of whom were students. Like troubles have arisen in the capital and Moscow, while it is said here that the people are moving like a mighty sea, moving at last. But this I doubt. Nihilism has affected the cities and portions of the southern provinces—but this is all. The people are not like the French race, but are dull, phlegmatic, stupid. They know of but two things—their church and the Czar ("little father"). They care for nothing save food and drink, especially drinking. To my thinking it will take another century so to change them that such a revolution as that in France would be possible. To-day there are over forty million whose instinct of subordination is a heritage of centuries

to be destroyed only with their lives. If the "little father" were threatened in any way the people would rise in his service and for a few cents a day, or for nothing at all, brave the rigours of an awful campaign—one from which they know there would be no chance of return to their wretched homes. They have undergone persecutions from those of the upper classes, to which the sufferings of the French people under their old kings were as nothing, yet it affects them but little, and rarely do you read of any rising, any burned châteaux, or murder of landlords. If you would be convinced of their love for the Czar enter an office, boat, or wretched hut and ridicule his picture, which is always there,—you would scarcely escape with your life. I ventured upon a mild criticism of one of his pictures on the Caspian Sea a few years since, and was promptly silenced by the captain of the ship, though my remarks merely related to the style of the imperial beard. This state of affairs holds from the Baltic to the Pacific, from the Arctic to the Black Sea and farther mountains. It will not and has never done any good to kill the Czar—the office survives and there will always be some one to fill it, one to whom these millions of people will yield unquestioning obedience through life unto death. So here in the South if a war occurs they will rise at the word, and if the scene of conflict should be Korea they will patiently cross Siberia in winter, though they do not know whether Korea belongs to its own people or to Japan or England, nor who any of the three is. That the "little father" calls is enough for them. I believe if you were to transfer a generation of

Russians to the Western lands of America, rear and educate them there, and then bring them back here —like the dogs of Constantinople and the blacks of Australia, they would return to their dung-heaps, to their old manner of living, and to their blind obedience to the Czar. The powers in Russia know all this, and smile grimly at outside prophecy of destruction for their Empire from internal dissensions.

As for the power of this Empire, it is, to my thinking, greater than the outside world—save England —appreciates. That Russia intends to retain Manchuria there is not a shadow of a doubt. She may rest awhile as she gathers strength, but it will be only a pause, and then Korea will fall under her rule and all Northern China as well. England knows this and will aid Japan in the struggle. Success may attend that side at first, but while Japan exhausts herself in the early months, as she must do, and England is far from her base of supplies, Russia is rolling up her men and stores over her own railroad, through her own countries. She has already over two hundred thousand troops in Manchuria, and that is but a small portion of the millions at her command. She is building up towns and stations of the greatest importance all the time. Look at Harbin, where the Manchurian Railway joins the main line from Vladivostok to Irkutsk. How many outsiders have ever heard of the place? It is but three years old and has a Russian population of forty thousand. There you find large flour mills and manufacturing establishments. There is an administration building costing a half million of

our money, expensive commercial schools, engine- and machine-shops, and so on. It will be one of the most important places in Manchuria. Dalny is another, and in that way Russia will build a bulwark which she will push steadily forward. Can the nations of the world stop her? I doubt it. They may cripple her for a time, but they can only cripple in spots. If that occurs the government will remain passive for a season and then move onward, achieving in the end what it started out to do. Germany and Russia do not love each other, yet they exist side by side with apparently little friction. Is it impossible for England and Russia to do likewise? It is stated that if Russia had had her way the Trans-Caspian Railway would have been carried forward through Afghanistan to India. England was asked to join in the enterprise, which would have given a through line to Calcutta and Bombay, but declined, and any attempt to build that road to-day would cause trouble. It would appear that it is necessary to maintain the independent existence of Afghanistan and its cutthroat people between England's possessions and those of Russia,—that it is necessary for the safety of India—is this true? If so, is it not a confession of weakness?

There can be no possible choice between the colonisation schemes of England and those of Russia. The former is a century in the lead, and it would be sad for the world and its progress to have England's work undone. Her interests would appear to demand that she side actively with Japan during this struggle in the Far East. In that case their combined fleets will be too strong for Russia

on the sea, but, having conquered there, will not Manchuria still remain Russian; and with her vast army constantly being reinforced, with her bases of supplies close at hand, what could Japan and England accomplish against her? Since my trip over the Siberian Railway last year I have often heard it stated that that road could not stand the great strain which would come upon it in case of war. I do not agree with that statement. The entire route is easy of construction and can be repaired and kept in order at small cost, both as to money and labour. Lake Baikal is crossed by large train ferries and it is quite possible to send eastward all the men needed to hold Manchuria if there are not enough there already—which seems to be the case. There is a railroad building south-eastward from some point on the Siberian Railway towards Peking —of which little seems to be known, and of which Russia would like nothing known. When that is finished she will have a double outlet into the Far East. The Trans-Caspian Railway now pauses on the western borders of China—whither next? There is a railway building up the Murgab towards Herat —will it stop there? Another line is to enter Persia from Tiflis. Is Teheran its objective point, or the Persian Gulf? Truly, the octopus of Russia is reaching out, and the countries once within the grasp of her arms will stay there. Attack her on the sea, and you may succeed for a time. Attack her on the land, and she will retire before you as she did before the French a century ago, and allow nature to conquer you. While she lives and thrives in the awful cold which wraps her land

from ocean to ocean for nine months of the year her enemies will die like flies.

As for Russia's rights in the Far East: Manchuria is a single province of China, of several hundred thousand square miles. Of this vast area Russia, according to *Consular Report*, page 9, by M. M. Langhorne, United States Commercial Agent at Dalny, issued by the State Department, Washington, July 28, 1903, made a small lease. The official statement is as follows: "The territory was leased by the Chinese government to Russia on March 27, 1898, the lease being for a term of twenty-five years, to be subsequently extended by mutual agreement. The lease included eight hundred square miles of territory and all the harbours between Port Arthur and Talienwan, the harbour of Port Arthur and a part of Talienwan to be for the sole use of Russian and Chinese men-of-war, Russia to have the privilege of extending its Trans-Siberian Railroad through Manchuria (on the leased land) to Port Arthur and Talienwan."

This, then, out of the vastness of Manchuria, without objection at the time on the part of any Power, became legally Russian soil, subject only to the terms of the lease. Russia has never invaded one inch of Manchuria outside its legal lease. In completing the 5100 miles of railway, she invaded no territory, never overstepped the bounds of her legal rights.

In other words, Russia got the use of a little strip of Manchurian territory with honour.

Why have the Powers never combined to oust Russia from Manchuria? Because she has never

gone outside of territory legally leased, her rights in which, if sued in even the City Court of New York, would be securely confirmed.

What business is it of any government that Russians continue to occupy and enjoy their own right? What warrant has any one to assume that Russia would ever overstep those rights?

Has she not, therefore, as much right in Manchuria as England has in Egypt or South Africa, or the United States have in Panama? Personally I consider that each nation is within its rights—for the sake of the progress of the world and the benefit of mankind, if for no other reason.

In diplomacy I fancy that Russia does unto others what they would like to do to her, but—she does it first. Such would seem to be the present case in the Far East. In commercial transactions her merchants stand fairly well,—one does not hear much to the contrary,—but ask the opinion of the Englishman who has spent his life in Japan as to the integrity of the men of business of that nation. You will find that it is of a low order. You will also discover that Chinese are employed in all the banks—never a Jap. Japs are a clean, attractive people—pleasing to the eye and senses—and it is customary in America to consider them almost perfect. You have enjoyed your stay there—you have not seen the wretchedness and poverty which the traveller associates with Russia, but facts show that those people can be as brutal as the Russians. Witness the murder of the Korean Queen and the sinking of that defenceless Chinese transport *Kowshung*. I have seen it stated that Japan has "never taken an

acre which did not belong to herself"—how about Formosa? And what were her intentions in the Sandwich Islands, which we thwarted? Furthermore, is it her fault that she does not now own extensive possessions in China, Manchuria, and Korea? If you read the following pages you will find that Russia is engaged in preserving peace in all the vast territory which they will describe; that she is civilising the people according to her ideas. Those ideas may not be up to your standard, but the state of affairs resulting therefrom is far in advance of anything ever existing there before. Russia is the only country to do this work. She is their next-door neighbour and understands their people, amongst whom you will travel with perfect safety because of the protection of the Czar.



CHAPTER IV

GEORGIAN HOTELS—THE MONASTERY OF GHILATI

THE traveller in this twentieth century will, to my thinking, not feel *remote* in any section of Europe until he enters the borderland of the Russian Empire. Constantinople certainly does not impress me so, neither does Athens, old Spain, or far Norway; but enter Russia and you seem to cast your modern garments and thoughts all from you and step forth into "remote-land"—a kingdom through which you will move as in a dream. If it be Russia, your visions will be barbarous without softness; if it be Asia, where the soft pad-pad of the passing camels lulls you to sleep, you will dream of Hage Babba, of Lalla Rookh, and of the flight into Egypt, different as those visions must be.

Here at Batoum, you are entering the borderland of Romance. As I lean from the window of this barren hotel room, the long, wide streets of the Russian quarter stretch away and are lost in the sea on one side, and towards the snow-capped Caucasus on the other. It is rainy and gusty; the town appears empty save for the ever-present Cossack and some drowsy droskhy drivers in their shabby little vehicles. There is ever present that pungent smell

of paint, which is part and parcel of all these dominions. It is cold, and I close the window and draw my fur coat over me as I try to read. This room is typical of all the hotels of the Empire,—a sizable sitting-room with a small rug on its brown oil-cloth-covered floor, placed before a stiff sofa covered with green rep, before which stands a table with a velvet cloth. There are an iron bed and a wooden wash-stand with marble top, above which rises a sort of tank with a faucet into the basin, but how to work that faucet is beyond me until I happen to glance down and notice a pedal projecting below the stand. At least I can try that, and I do so with the result that a stream of water spurts here, there, and everywhere except into the basin, which, by the way, has no plug. You are supposed to catch the water in a sponge, and if you desire a basin full, you must save your spare corks,—never travel without corks. There is a little extra bedroom attached to this larger one, which you may not desire to pay for, but you had best do so, or the management will contrive to get some one into that bed, even if they introduce them through the window, which opens into the long, draughty hall. But, on the whole, you are comfortable, and I have long since arrived at the conclusion that the hotels of this world are generally well adapted to the land in which they are placed. I do not agree with Miss Scidmore in her wholesale condemnation of the hotels and railway carriages in India. I cannot imagine anything more uncomfortable or unhealthy than a luxurious Pullman car in that hot, dusty land. As for the hotels, the Great Eastern at Calcutta is a horror and should

be destroyed by the Board of Health; but we went to Mrs. Walters's boarding-houses and were most delightfully situated. The wide verandas, cool, clean rooms, and good cuisine are still remembered with pleasure. Throughout that land of the sun we found comfortable inns with but few exceptions,—notably that Great Eastern, Lees' at Cawnpur, and the Elphinstone at Madras. As for the food, on the whole it was far ahead of that of Java. So it is here,—the tea and coffee are excellent, and no people have yet discovered how to spoil boiled eggs; but I am drowsy and dizzy from the sea's air and motion, so to bed. Good-night to you. I shall try to dream of the ancient Georgians and fair Queen Tamara.

Morning breaks bright and cloudless. The sunlight pours into my room as though there had never been clouds and rain, and life held naught save happiness. The sea sparkles, and the Caucasus reach away in long ridges of snow-capped peaks. The flat Russian town spreads around, dull and monotonous, save for a brilliant dome or two. The churches are not many in Batoum. How distinctly Russian are even these glimpses from my window! At the intersection of the streets stands a policeman ever on guard, not the gay boys of our American force, but silent, stern, and seemingly suspicious of every man or beast that passes him, while the people have a downcast look that impresses one unpleasantly.

We are met at the station by both British and American consuls, and the affairs of Russia are discussed and settled in short order. It is well to re-

member in travelling in the dominions of the Czar, especially in the remote parts, that much time and no haste is to be used. A railway station tries the patience of a European most thoroughly.

As one enters the general waiting-room one might fancy that the entire population was fleeing from some advancing foe. The first-class passenger is conducted through all this to the restaurant, where he is expected to imbibe much tea, his dragoman or guide the while engaged in conflict with porters of all sorts, and if he counts the number of packages confided to his care *once* he does so a dozen times, that being his only surety as to the whole, and, lacking the proper number, he sometimes makes it up by one belonging to some one else, but you don't mind that if you gain thereby.

An hour is none too long to work a passage through all that confusion, but it is done at last, and then you are securely fastened in your compartment. Dead silence precedes the starting of a train, and when it does move it is done slowly.

The great northern continent stretches from the tumultuous waters of the Bay of Biscay eastward through France, Belgium, and Holland, rising in Germany to the Hartz Mountains, but sinking again to a dead level unbroken through Prussia and all Russia, until, like a vast roller of the southern ocean, the Ural Mountains slowly lift the dead level, but never to any great height, and as slowly lower it again until it spreads away into the almost endless steppes and forests of Siberia, which in turn give place to the frozen oceans of the far north.

Its great chain of mountains, commencing with

the Pyrenees as we move eastward, sends its spurs to north and south, but the mass of the greater mountains marches steadily to the eastward through the Alps and Carpathians, to the Caucasus and the holy mountains of Asia Minor, and then through chain after chain in Asia until the "roof of the world is reached," above which tower the gigantic Himalayas, so far above the reach of man that surely they must be the abode of God, where nothing save day and night, with their sunshine and storms, marks the passage of time. Nowhere throughout their entire length are these barriers of the plains more rugged or fantastic in shape than between the Black and the Caspian seas, where the Caucasus toss their fantastic forms suddenly upward from the plains of Russia.

The traveller from the north will cover apparently endless versts of level plain, seemingly uninhabited and desolate, for these railways are built to avoid towns in their progress from city to city. Nothing of interest save some hundreds of poverty-stricken, hopeless-looking people, a forest here and there, dismal and dark, fit habitation for the prowling wolves,—all spots in the dead level of the apparently endless plains, until one scarce cares to look up from book or paper; but as the south is neared and one approaches the end of the journey, suddenly the Caucasus march across the horizon as though ordered there by a power that would bar further progress. They remind one of an enormous saw, its dark, steel-blue base resting on the emerald-hued plains, rising abruptly without foot-hills to the jagged, snow-crowned summit, sharply outlined against a sky of purest, deepest blue. The range presents



MONASTERY OF GHILATI

its friendly side toward Georgia, and as we approach it to-day domes of green and domes of white stretch away toward the rising sun.

The rail from Batoum to Tiflis skirts the seashore for some miles, running through a tangled forest almost tropical in its character, the presence of palm trees alone being necessary to complete the picture. Kutais—where Jason sought the golden fleece—the ancient capital of the Imeritian kings, some ninety miles from Batoum, is situated upon the river Rion. The lower ranges of the Caucasus rise around it, rich in verdure.

The hotel of Kutais is abominable, but our stay is too brief to start housekeeping with Casimir as cook, so we endure the house as best we may until we start on a visit to the monastery of Ghilati, some miles away. Ghilati stands upon a lofty hill, commanding all the valley of the Red River to the south, and backed on the north by the higher mountains, with the glistening cone of Tetnuld in the distance. The church is Byzantine as to its central position and possesses a cupola topped by a conical green dome. These conical green domes on the Armenian churches are characteristic of the Caucasus, and are so different from the balloon-like, many-coloured domes on the Russian churches, that they attract and hold the attention. The church is eight hundred years old, and stones of great size have been used in its construction. Around the doors and windows are ornamental carvings in flat relief. While the Latin cross is used in these carvings, these churches are of the shape of a Greek cross. The walls are lined with frescoes of both the

Byzantine and Italian schools, and all have been subjected to a restoration more or less to be commended. Here are sacred pictures glittering with



DAVID III., KING OF GEORGIA, "THE RENOVATOR"

gold and precious stones; here one sees pictures more ancient than the church itself; here are sacred robes covered with pearls, and here is the crown of the Imeritian kings, a sort of hood with gold bands and

buckles and with a cross on the top. You may see it in the frescoes of the walls round about you. In a small chapel close to the church on one side sleeps King David of Imeritia, the founder of Ghilati, and the greatest monarch of his time. He ruled Georgia between the seas; he became king in his twenty-sixth year, and died in his fifty-fourth, still in the prime of life, and he sleeps under a massive slab bearing an inscription in the Chutzuri character. Near by rest the trophies of his greatest victory, the gates of Gundsha (the modern Jelissametpol).

This church was restored in 1089 and again in the thirteenth century. The walls hold many fine mosaics, and its library and treasury are crowded with objects of interest. There is an image of the Saviour eight hundred years old, and the famous black portrait of the Virgin, painted by St. Luke with the Virgin's milk; and here you first read the name "Tamara," famous in romance and story over all the land, for here in the vaults of the Bagradites family she lies buried, so it is claimed.

In my wanderings later on through the streets and shops of Tiflis I found a small pamphlet in the Russian language, giving more of her history than is generally known to the outer world, and it is sufficiently romantic to include some of it in these notes, especially as Tamara was as important a figure in the history of Georgia as Elizabeth or Mary Stuart in that of England and Scotland. While this pamphlet is probably founded upon truth and makes her character all that was good and beautiful, still, as with the Stuart Queen, there is another side, and the history or legends of that grim castle

in the Darial Pass tells of lovers cast hurtling downward to their deaths from its battlements, when their day was over.

Amongst the other abodes of the Georgian Queen none, perhaps, was more beautiful in its day than the famous Château de Rose, or "Vardzia." The traveller must proceed eastward and by a branch road some hours to the south-east, and then journey by carriage before he can reach the ruins of the famous castle. The citadel is but an empty shell now, but withal a very stately ruin. Standing high on yellow rocks above the rushing waters of a yellow river, its yellow walls are sharply outlined against a fair blue sky. Treeless hills are on guard all round it. There is no green save in some faded-out poplars near the water, and no sign of life save a few wretched huts. This citadel may be of the date of Tamara, but the rock-cut church and monastery beneath it are certainly much older than her time. This church claims also the honour of being her last resting-place. It is constructed partly on and partly in the rocks, and connected with it are apartments, also rock-cut, where the kings and queens are supposed to have dwelt during their visits to the castle monastery. Some of them appear to be arranged for summer, others for winter. There is one grotto some thirty feet long by twenty wide. From one of the grottoes a window opens into the church, so that mass could be heard in that way. The summer apartments open upon wooden balconies, which command a view of the valley of the Koura. There are innumerable chambers in the rock all around the church. Vardzia was sacked by Tamerlane and



37 CHÂTEAU DE ROSE

by the Pasha Takmazh. The glory of the Château de Rose has been past and gone for centuries, but in its halls and courts Tamara lived out much of the romance of her life—it was her "Crookstone Castle," but the romance of the Château de Rose was more than the passing dream of the Scottish tower. I can find no record of its after history, no story of its final destruction, but to those who love to clamber over ruins I would say: "Come to the Château de Rose, it is still full of fascination." But to the story of its Queen.



CHAPTER V

GEORGIA—QUEEN TAMARA

GEORGIA, sometimes called Trans-Caucasia, is that land of beauty, romance, and story, connecting Europe with Turkey in Asia. Most of mankind, when they think of it at all, remember only that it was the mart from which the Turks were wont of old to draw their beautiful women; but the history of Georgia is probably more romantic than that of any other country on the globe.

Stretching from sea to sea, between the Caucasus and Armenia Mountains, it has been a battle-ground for centuries, down to the time when Russia extended her mantle or her pall, as you please, southward, and quiet fell upon the land. This land submitted to Alexander the Great, and then came the long line of Georgian kings for nearly two thousand years. Christianity had spread over the land as early as the fourth century. Timour swept over the land in the fourteenth century. The Arabs and Persians both had their day in Georgia; the power of the latter gave way only to that of Russia, when Alexander, in 1803, proclaimed it a Russian province. But of all the history of Georgia, that which relates to Queen Tamara is the most romantic.



QUEEN TAMARA

Reigning from 1184 to 1206, she seems to have been indeed the Tudor Queen of Georgia, with all the beauty of the unfortunate Stuart.

Alexander of Macedonia, Cyrus, Tamara, and similar chieftains do die only bodily, as their spirits for ever and ever float on the horizon of the history of mankind. They alone form an epoch in the life of nations, an epoch of glory and culture.

Tamara was a great woman; her reign is considered as a golden age in the history of Georgia, and the spiritual, moral, and political growth of its people during her reign reaches its highest development. To her submit themselves not only the people of Kartalie, but all the highlanders of Caucasus and all the Mohammedans and Armenians, and not only these people, but, according to the historian Kartlis, Tshovreb, all east to the Caspian Sea and Derbent, and west to the Sea of Azov, and Trebizond, and north to the Russian frontier, and finally south to Erzerum and Tauris, were kept under the sceptre of Tamara. Having raised her native country in the esteem of foreigners and after establishing peace within the Empire, she greatly increased the internal prosperity of her kingdom.

During her reign were born poets of talent, remarkable ecclesiastical orators, architects, and artists. Magnificent churches were erected; cities established; canals built. For all these benefits grateful posterity gives her the title *not* of a Tzaritza, but of a Tzar (Mapa).

Tamara was born in the year 1156. Her parents were Tzar George III. and Tzaritza Burduhan. She was a beautiful woman, and, according to the

chronicler, she surpassed all women by her wisdom, virtue, reason, and beauty.

Tamara was brought up by her aunt Rusudan, a woman of excellent culture. From the deeds of Tamara it can be seen that she received a very good education. Her contemporary writers compare her with philosophers and call her "Vessel of Wisdom." She was not idle a moment. During her leisure time she was making dresses for herself and the poor also. She occupied herself with knitting and weaving.

Her character was very kind, affable, and obedient. She was tall, graceful, and of great beauty. Many princes sought her hand. Her contemporary poet, Rustovely, says: "Beads are Tamara's eyes; her body, a well-shaped crystal; her look, for the evil, worse than a chastisement from God; tender, bright, stately like a lioness, graceful in all her motions as a true tzaritza." Besides all these moral and physical merits one more adorned her,—she was a true daughter of her church. Every day a Mass was celebrated in the chapel of her palace. Her favourite expression was: "I am the father of the orphans and judge of the widows." The chronicler says that she took care of the poor on her own account from the money she received for her handiwork. For charitable purposes she laid aside every year one per cent. of the revenue of the kingdom.

As it seems, fate predestined to Tamara a wide field of activity. She became heiress to the throne quite accidentally. Her uncle, King David, having a presentiment of death, appointed as his successor his minor son Demetrius, but until his majority he

appointed his brother George as a regent. George, holding the reins of the government, one year after the death of his brother assumed the crown as George III., ratifying at the same time his former promise to his brother to give the throne to his nephew when Demetrius should be of age. But the rights of the heir were forgotten; George did not intend to give up the throne, and Tamara's accession was surrounded by mystery. Her father, George III., either on account of a dream of his wife or the sudden death of the heir, Demetrius, raised her to the ancestral throne. Her mother gave her on this occasion the following advice: "Be worthy of the throne you will ascend. Be as an unmovable protection for the infirm, a strong defence for the poor. Conquer hearts by kindness, the mind by wisdom, the eyes by beauty; smite with the sword the disobedient, and rule my wonderful land from end to end."

Tamara's accession occurred in her twenty-third year. The coronation was very solemn and took place in the summer residence of the Tzars of Georgia in Kartalie.

For that solemn feast the king invited the Tzaritza, mother of Tamara, patriarchs, bishops, viziers, grandees, commanders of the army, and people. The Tzar sat himself down, and on his right side he placed the future Tzaritza Tamara. She was vested in a mantle of purple and gold, and on her head he placed a crown of gold ornamented with precious stones; after this was done a "Te Deum" was sung and the Tzar took first the oath of allegiance to serve faithfully and truthfully the newly crowned

Tzaritza. However, he held the reins of government during his life, and Tamara was retired to the companionship and guidance of her aunt, Rusudan. During the coronation great feasts were held throughout Georgia.

Ere long she lost her mother, Queen Burduhan, and in the year 1184 her father.

About this time Tamara in reality took her seat on the ancestral throne, and appears to have been subject to a second coronation. Patriarchs and bishops blessed her. Choristers executed suitable songs and poets improvised laudatory hymns. One of the bishops put on her head the crown, another girded her with the sword.

Liberal presents were made to all. To the rejoicing people she promised to persecute injustice, falseness, usury, and other vices, and said she would encourage justice and virtue, and take care of the prosperity and greatness of the people at large. The young Tzaritza enraptured all Georgia. By her order the high statesmen, ecclesiastic and secular, met together. The Tzaritza opened the assembly in person and said: "Holy Fathers, you are called in the name of God to be our guides and the rulers of Holy Church, and therefore you are responsible for the salvation of our souls. Inquire into all, establish justice, convict all disobedient, wicked. First begin with me. Do not be partial to sovereigns because they are great persons, and do not scorn the poor because they are humble. You speak and I will act. You instruct and I will execute. Let us help each other for the maintenance of sacred laws. You act as clergy-

men and I will act as a Tzar, you as rulers and I as a guardian."

By her sensible orders she rooted out all rebellions. Soon all were convinced that she was not to be trifled with. All the corrupt officials were changed and replaced by honest and upright men.

Churches were exempt of all taxes, the lot of the lower classes was relieved, and she encouraged agriculture.

She ruled her large kingdom so cleverly that no one was executed or flogged. Many folk-lores speak about her wisdom and bravery. One legend describes her conquest of the Caspian Sea; some say that she was mightier than the mountain Ararat.

From all over the world monks were coming to her for alms, and she was giving to all generously. Once Alexis, the covetous Emperor of Byzantium, found out that the monks coming from Georgia through Constantinople had plenty of gold. So he ordered their arrest and the confiscation of their riches. Tamara, informed of the impious act of the Emperor, sent more money to the robbed monks, and against the perpetrator of such crimes she sent a large army. Many provinces were taken from the Byzantine Emperor. A new province was formed from them, which was called the province of Trebizond. In forming this new province, Tamara intended to make difficult the spreading of Mohammedanism in the midst of the Christian population of Asia Minor and the Caucasian shore of the Black Sea.

You cannot find in the folk-lore of Georgia a monastery, fortress, canal, or even a large stone

which was not connected with the name of Tamara. Almost every nook and corner claims the tomb. She is considered by the Church as a saint.

The great Queen does not appear to have been more fortunate than her sisters of to-day in her selection of a husband. The grandees, the commanders of the army, and the bishops met at the house of the Patriarch and began to deliberate upon this momentous subject. Many princes and tzars were proposed, but the assembly could not find one worthy of Tamara. God had not yet created an equal to her. The assembly was ready to dissolve, when suddenly arose one of the Princes, Emir of Kartalie and Tiflis, and said: "I know a son of a Russian sovereign, Andrew, who was banished after the death of his father and lives now in the town of Swendge, which belongs to the Khan of Keeptshak." The assembly, knowing that the Russians were Christians, decided to send one of the merchants of Tiflis, by the name of Zankan Zarobabelly.

The Russian Prince arrived and made a very good impression on the people by his majestic appearance, perfect constitution, and beauty, but his moral qualities and character were unknown.

After that, the Patriarch, grandees, commanders of the army, and others came to Rusudan and through her announced to Tamara their desire to marry her to the Russian Prince. Greatly surprised by this unexpected intelligence, Tamara came out and said: "How can you, dear friends, decide to do such a thing without deliberation? We do not know either his temper, his conduct, his habits, or his character. Try him first."

The assembly did not agree with her. She was told that she had no children and the throne no heir. A commander of the army is required, and they tried to persuade her to marry. Tamara, being afraid of the resolution of the assembly, which



PATRIARCH OF GEORGIA

would put upon her the bonds of matrimony, asks for the postponement of the wedding, but Rusudan and the army would not allow it. All possible means were used to force her consent, which was finally obtained. They began to prepare a solemn feast, worthy of the splendid and magnificent couple, a feast which lasted a whole week. Two princes

only did not join in these festivals. For a long time they had been suitors for Tamara's hand, and when they were informed that she was married, they were overwhelmed with grief and died soon after. So the "Conqueror of the Caspian Sea" was conquered by the stubbornness of her friends.

In all the expeditions her husband took an active part and was very successful, but in the lapse of time the Prince changed. According to the chronicler, Satan took possession of the soul of this Russian Darnley, and he began to act like a barbarian, became a drunkard, abused Tamara, and ruined himself morally, and lastly caught a disease called "Sin of Sodom." Tamara tried for two and a half years to bring her husband to his senses, through the Patriarchs, monks, and learned men. She tried to save him from the path of perdition, but all in vain. The more she strove the worse he became; he hearkened to none. Finally, grieved by the conduct of her husband, she went before an assembly of the grandees and said: "Although the divine law forbids me to leave my husband, yet I cannot be the wife of a man who violates the chastity of matrimony and who profanes the holiness of the house of God." Having said this, she left the assembly. The Prince fell into a great sorrow; it was easier for him to leave the throne than the beautiful Tamara.

Without the least hesitation they brought him to the shore of the Black Sea, put him on a ship, and, having furnished him with a large stock of clothes and precious stones, sent him to Constantinople. This was in the year 1190.

But the former Tzar of Georgia did not remain in

Constantinople very long. Provided with a large Greek army he started for Georgia and the reclamation of the throne. Tamara learned about this in Tiflis. With affliction she summoned the Orthodox army.

The battle was fought on the upper part of the river Koura in the valley of Nigali. According to the historian Brasie, the battle was fought bravely on both sides and was worthy of the valiant Georgian soldiers. Tamara gained the victory, the foe betook himself to flight, but was subsequently captured with some prisoners. He was pardoned and sent away from Georgia.

He made still another attempt to regain the throne, but it proved a failure.

The fates which ruled the life of Mary Stuart must have taken some lessons from the life of Tamara, but the Georgian Queen was happier in the end than the Scotch Princess.

As soon as the rumour of the rupture between Tamara and her husband spread abroad, Georgia was overrun with suitors from all corners of the world. Many princes, says the chronicler, were madly in love with Tamara. The oldest son of the Emperor of Greece was so deeply in love with her that he lost his head and walked as a stunned man. The sons of the Tzar of Antioch were in no better condition. The Sultan had a son who was in love with Tamara; he was a Mohammedan, and was forbidden to marry a Christian because he would lose his soul. But the love of Montofrodin was so strong that he did not pay much attention to threats and instructions. He decided to go to Georgia.

One beautiful day, Tamara was informed about the coming of Montofrodin. He arrived with a large suite of courtiers, grandees, ecclesiastical persons, eunuchs, slaves, and bondmaids. He brought to the Tzaritza for presents many packs of precious stones, costly vessels, expensive textile fabrics, also droves of unbroken horses and several tame panthers. Tamara ordered the guests to be received with due honours. All were accommodated in the palace. A grand banquet was given in honour of Montofrodin, who occupied a place of honour and was seated by the throne on a costly armchair. This banquet was followed by different performances in which acrobats, dancers, singers, etc., took part. Tamara gave many gifts to the guests. After the banquet was over Montofrodin left for a hunt in different parts of Georgia. During his stay in the kingdom he reviewed all the remarkable things of the country. So he spent the winter happily, thinking that he had made a good impression on the Tzaritza and grandees. But such was not the case. When he returned from the hunt to Tiflis he was married, not to Tamara, but to a girl born from a concubine — daughter of a Tzar. After the great feasts of the wedding were over, the newly married couple was given many costly presents and sent home. Thereafter he drops out of history.

Tamara's choice finally fell on a prince of Osset called David, who was a distant relative. They were brought up together by her aunt, Rusudan. He had received a very good education, had an athletic constitution, was very handsome, and had strength past all belief. From childhood they had loved each

other. I think this mutual love which in course of time passed over to a mutual worship was the very secret which prevented the strengthening and consolidation of the matrimonial bond of Tamara and the Russian Prince, and also prompted the Tzaritza's selection as a bridegroom of an insignificant Osset prince.

The wedding of Tamara and David Bagratian was held in the Church of Didoob and the celebration was held in the field of the same name. The wedding feast was conducted by Tzarina Rusudan, and was followed by different entertainments; favours poured like rain, the poor were enriched, the debtors were released from their debts, and the orphans and widows were helped. All this happened in the year 1193. Soon the newly married couple entered Tiflis, and boundless was the rejoicing of the people. David warranted the expectations of the people and calmed the Tzarina and the Empire. At the end of one year after the coronation of David all were convinced that he surpassed all sharpshooters, horsemen, pedestrians, fighters, and scholars.

Years passed. Tamara had no children, and the people were very sad. All offered up fervent prayers to the Almighty, asking for an heir to the throne —prayers answered by the birth of a son (1194) whom she called George. Two years after, a daughter was born. Besides these two children she had none.

Tamara won her military fame after the birth of her children. The chronicler says that warlike and conquering designs were unknown to Tamara. Her army assumed always a defensive position, and if

ever it passed to the aggressive it was because she was compelled by her enemies who were jealous of the triumph of the cross. She was satisfied, says the chronicler, with her ancestral inheritance and did not wish to add a single foot of land to her extensive Empire. On the contrary, being fully aware of the ruinous consequences of the wars, she tried hard by mutual deliberations to avert the conflicts between the interested states.

But notwithstanding the peaceful frame of mind of the Tzaritza of Georgia, some of the neighbouring nations did throw the apple of discord and bloodshed. Here is a matter of fact which serves to illustrate the aforesaid: In the year 1208 at Easter, early in the morning, when all the Christians were in church, the Sultan of Ardebyl suddenly came to the town of Any, which he entered by force and caused terrible bloodshed. Twelve thousand inhabitants were slain, and after the town was plundered the foe returned home with a great booty.

Once for all, to prevent such a recurrence, Tamara decided to repay the savages in the same coin. She waited until the season of the Mohammedans' Lent. Then the Georgian army, under the command of Zacharial Mhrgrdzely, was sent to take the field. On the night of the Mohammedans' full moon, the Georgian army approached the town of Ardebyl. No sooner had the cry from the minarets awakened the inhabitants than the soldiers of Zacharial entered the place by force and unexpectedly captured it. "Tooth for tooth, eye for eye; twelve thousand souls in an instant were slain." The Sultan and his wives and children were captured, and the town demolished.

On account of similar provoking actions on the part of other Mohammedan reigning princes, Tamara conquered Harasan, Tauris, Erzerum, and other towns bordering upon Georgia. She waged several wars with her neighbours which always resulted in victory for the Georgian army and the overthrow of the enemy. Her most celebrated campaigns were those of Shambar, Tauris, and Bolost.

During the reign of Tamara, all Georgia was divided into nine military districts; each district had during peace a governor, and during war a commander of the army; besides the militia commanded by the governor, the Tzaritza kept a regular paid army of about sixty thousand men. The army was commanded by a chief commander. This army was obliged to keep the garrison in the towns and fortresses which had a strategic importance, keep guard of the Tzaritza, and generally to be ready for a campaign at her first call.

The armament of the Georgian forces, according to Dadeshkiliany in his article, "Military Organisation and Battle Order of the Georgian Army in the Period of 1089–1222," consisted of a bow and arrow, halberd, iron hammer, lance, broadsword, short glaive, and safety arms like a coat of mail, cuirass, iron helmets, with an iron net for the protection of the face.

The country was defended by a line of fortresses with stone walls from twenty-one to thirty-five feet high, and by towers that were built at the corners of the walls. These towers were used by the sharpshooters and stone-throwing machines. Generally the Georgians conducted their wars according to the

Greek standard. The forts of the Georgians were situated mostly on the southern side of the Empire, because it was secure on the flanks by the Caspian and Black Seas, the rear line by the Caucasian Mountains and therefore was only accessible from the south.

The battle of Shambar gave such glory to Tamara that for a long time not only the neighbouring nations remembered her, but also her distant neighbour, John the Terrible of Russia.[1] The battle of Shambar was fought against Amir-Abubakar, sovereign of Persia, who sent his formidable army against Tamara's kinsman, Sharvansha, sovereign of Derbent, who hid his youngest brother, Amir Miron. The conquered Sharvansha, with Amir Miron, came to Tamara asking for protection against the foe; they implored her not to refuse the requested assistance, and after all they gave an oath to put her daughter on the throne of Persia. Tamara declined the latter, but expressed her consent to the former. Messengers and runners made known the intention of the Tzaritza to undertake an expedition against the threatening foe. Tamara left Tiflis to join the army to cheer up the soldiers and to give orders. Amir-Abubakar induced the Caliph to give a religious character to the expedition and asked for the holy standard of Mohammed. According to the chronicler, the army of the Amir was as numerous "as the sand of the sea and the stars of the sky."

In the middle of June in the year 1203, after the war council and before the departure of the army to

[1] Not the Ivan of the 16th century.

the battlefield, Tamara addressed the soldiers as follows: "My comrades, do not be downcast that the enemy is numberless, and we but few. Be aware that God is with us, trust in Him only, and rely upon His Cross. Go into the land of the enemy under the protection of the Mother of God, and under her shield you will return."

After the war, Tamara returned to Tiflis. After a long and severe battle her army was victorious. Amir-Abubakar had great difficulty in escaping. The holy standard of the Caliph served as a trophy for the Georgian army. The booty of the war consisted of 12,000 prisoners, 40 panthers, 20,000 horses, 7000 mules, and 15,000 loaded camels, and an innumerable quantity of precious articles, gold and stones. Most of the booty was divided between the soldiers and the monasteries. The standard of the Caliph was given as a gift to the holy image of the blessed Virgin of Hohul which is in Ghilati.

By her wise arrangements, Tamara conquered the "enemies of her country, enemies of the Lord's Cross and strengthened the nation of Georgians" in Caucasia from the northern boundary to Ispahan, Asia Minor, and even to Egypt, as it is seen from the epistle of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Dosipheus, to Georgia. Here are the words of this hierarch: "The family of Bagratian and their mapa, that is, the most pious tzars of Iberia, were from immemorial time defenders and wardens of the holy and vivifying sepulchre and other objects of precious adoration. Defenders, because, during the wars of the Greek tzars with the sultans of Egypt, the

monasteries of the holy Jerusalem were exposed to the danger of complete ruin and destruction, but the tzars of Iberia, as friends of the sultans of Egypt saved these holy monasteries; wardens, because during the wars of Greeks and Franks with the Arabs and Egyptian sultans, the monasteries came to the utmost decay and drew near to complete destruction. But the tzars of Iberia supported them, as it can be seen from a record written in the Georgian language, which is kept in the holy Golgotha."

Tamara possessed great wealth: from the resources of the State she built monasteries, fortresses, and palaces, constructed waterways for the irrigation of the neighbourhood of Tiflis, the plain of Shirack. She built battleships, enlarged several towns, enriched monasteries outside Georgia by countless donations; kept, from the means of the State, about sixty thousand scholars in the schools of Athos and other places; gave liberal subsidy for the maintenance of high schools and also lower schools in numerous monasteries. The chronicler says that during Tamara's reign poor and needy did not exist in Georgia. The treasury was full of gold, silver, and precious stones, measured by the bushel. Tamara had several palaces. Although her principal residence was in Tiflis, as the capital of Georgia, still the other palaces were not forgotten, and during different parts of the year she made personal visits to these palaces to find out the condition of the administration. The grand ruins of these palaces, except one in the city of Tiflis, which ought to be proud now of its restored castle of Metech with the old palatial church,—all bear witness to the mighty

residences of the days gone by. For instance, the castle of Vardzia (Château de Rose) was constructed within a rock and was so large that it could hold twenty thousand dwellers. This castle was supplied with an aqueduct, churches, and all necessary offices.

The palace in Nadtcharmaguevi was famous long before Tamara. A sepulchral epitaph on the monument of David the Restorer, the great-grandfather of Tamara, serves as a proof of the former glory of this palace. "In former years in Nadtcharmaguevi seven tzars I entertained. Turks, Persians, Arabs, from this kingdom I put out. From the river Ameer to the river Imeer the fishes I transferred. All this done, my arms on the breast I laid up and died." Although the monument is lost, the epitaph, expressed in iambic verses, is being sung throughout Georgia.

Tamara survived her husband, David, four years, dying on the 18th of January, 1213, nearly fifty-six years old and in the twenty-eighth year of her reign. The chronicler, having a presentiment of the awful sorrow and affliction the death of the Queen will bring on Georgia, warns the reader beforehand to be prepared to hear for the first time during the long reign of the Tzaritza a word of sorrow and affliction, instead of customary cheerful and pleasant narrations. "Succeeded, disappeared the Sun of Georgia. God summoned our beloved mother; the pillar of faith and fatherland is down."

Tamara was afflicted for some years. Finally in the fall of the year 1212, during her sojourn in the palace of Nadtcharmaguevi, her disease increased so much that it was impossible to conceal it longer.

The grieved courtiers put her on a litter and brought her to Tiflis, from whence in a short time she was transported to a country house in Samchet, but her health steadily failed. Doctors summoned from every corner of her kingdom could not cure her. In all the churches the "Te Deum" was recited for the restoration of the health of the beloved Queen, but all in vain. She was brought back to Tiflis, where she died on the 18th of January. "So disappeared the Sun which shone for more than a quarter of a century for the glory of Georgia." As an underground rumbling was heard the general sobbing all over the kingdom. The heavens and the earth lamented with Georgia the death of Tamara. It is claimed that she was interred in the Bagratian's family vault in Ghilati. The following epitaph was composed by the people, in her memory: "I, Tamara, was Tzaritza, I was illustrious all over. Boundary marks I put on the sea. Many lands I annexed to my kingdom. The vicinity of Erzerum I leased and the Ispahan I laid under contribution. After accomplishing so many deeds, in nine yards of linen swathed was I interred." So passed Tamara, Queen of Georgia. Let us hope that there is no truth in those legends of that castle in the Darial.

The darkness of midnight settled over Georgia soon after Tamara's death, and about 1236 the hordes of Ghengis Khan swept down upon her. The invasion of Tamerlane occurred in 1387. He destroyed Tiflis in 1391, and invaded the land again later on. During all these years Islamism was making rapid progress upon the ruins of Christianity. For the faith of the Cross had held sway in Georgia for two



LAYING IN STATE OF QUEEN TAMARA

hundred years before the Arabs swept over the country.

As I lay aside the history of Tamara, our train stops at the station of her most ancient capital, Mizkettra—a sad sort of place to-day, but of great importance in the past.

Christianity was introduced into Georgia in the fourth century. Nini of Cappadoce, daughter of Zabitonne and Suzanne of Collastra, was the first to preach the new religion. She was twelve years old when her people came to Jerusalem, where her father was soon converted to our faith and became a hermit on the banks of thè Jordan. Her mother became a deaconess and consecrated her life to the service of the poor. Nini preached the Gospel in Rome and Greece, coming from the latter country into Georgia, and finally took refuge in those mountains above us, under which this ancient city of Mizkettra stands. It was pagan at that time, and during a fête in honour of their god Armeg, Nini prayed for divine interposition for their salvation, a prayer answered by the advent of a tempest so terrific that it destroyed and swept away both temple and god, stupefying king and people. Here the saint established her dwelling and erected a cross which she formed by two pieces of grapevine bound together with her own hair: this cross is to be seen to-day in Tiflis—so believers state.

In Mizkettra Nini continued to live, and shortly another storm on the mountains caused the king to become a convert, and Nini, sending to Greece for a bishop, Jean, he was baptised and also his people. Nini's work received its reward when a piece of the

true Cross, together with the benediction of the sovereign Pontiff, was sent to her. She finally died in 338 at Bodbe, and a convent for women—still extant —was erected over her grave.

For many centuries Mizkettra was the capital of Georgia. Here her kings lived and were crowned, and in the old church before us they lie buried. This structure was erected in the tenth century, was destroyed by Tamerlane, but afterwards restored. Though the bishops of Tiflis are still consecrated within its walls, the glory of Mizkettra has long since passed away. There remain two churches of some merit, but all else is in ruins. Deserted by most of its people for the neighbouring city of Tiflis, it lies sleeping the years away on this bank high above the rushing river, and so we leave it and journey onward toward the city of to-day. The student cannot but reflect as he closes the history of Georgia that her grandest human aspirations have been represented in her women. In Nini the highest moral and religious force, in Tamara the acme of military and administrative sagacity. These names, Nini and Tamara, are the dearest to the people of Georgia.

TIFLIS

The day's ride is very beautiful, and as we fortunately have slight showers, there is no dust, while the air is laden with all the delicious fresh odours of spring. A Vermont boy would be amused at the attempts of these people toward tilling the soil. The plough used is of the most primitive description, and



65 MIZKETTRA, THE ANCIENT CAPITAL OF GEORGIA

is drawn by ten yoke of young steers, guarded and conducted by seven men. The field that they are at work upon certainly is not more than three acres in extent, and at their rate of progress it should be ready for planting about October 1st, this being only March. The Vermont boy, with a good plough and stout pair of horses, would do the whole thing between the hours of milking and his noonday dinner, even allowing time for the removal of the usual rocks to be found on all New England farms. Numerous ruined castles and towers are passed, perched high up on the mountains or close to the rushing river. Armenian churches are now inclosed in high, strong, fortress-like walls; otherwise such jewels as adorn their shrines would prove too tempting to the robbers of the mountains.

This valley of Tiflis reminds one of many in France. Hedges of primrose, poppies, and cornflowers, roses and cherries; yet with all its resemblance to France, there is a certain indescribable something that recalls the "Land of the Vulture," and one would not be surprised to see the minarets of Cairo rise from the valley. The resemblance is even stronger when Tiflis comes in sight. The capital of Georgia looks very Eastern, very Oriental, in the evening sunlight. But the first entrance into her streets convinces us that we are under the dominion of the Czar. Russian police stand here, there, and everywhere, and the wide berth that is given them demonstrates better than words the control that Government exercises over this southern possession. There is a monument near the western entrance of the town, on the spot where the Czar

Paul nearly lost his life through a runaway team. It would have been better if the accident had succeeded in ridding Russia of that licentious monarch. I fancy that the Empress Catherine imported her "particular friends" from this section. The men are very handsome, but of the far-famed Georgian women I can say very little. From here the Turks of old procured their beauties, and the types which pleased them are still plentiful in the streets of Tiflis—huge in size, with flabby, chalky skins, and faces with no ray of feeling or intelligence. That was their idea of beauty, and they could not have come to a better market. I have seen but one woman I could call beautiful. I shall mention her farther on.

I find, upon descending at the excellent Hôtel de Londres, that I am "remembered" once more in Georgia, and all the forlorn and lonely feeling departs as the pleasant-voiced landlady, Madame Richter, advances with both hands extended, and a "Welcome again to Tiflis!" I am shown up-stairs into the same room, most comfortable in all respects, and I rub my eyes in some doubt as to whether I have ever been away.

How dirty we are! how delicious the huge baths of the town feel to our tired bodies! The water is naturally hot and I sit for half an hour under a strong spout. There is absolutely nothing that they will not furnish you at these bath-houses, if you pay for it. But all things are very expensive at Tiflis, as I discover this morning when I desire to cable home—six roubles per word ($3.00); more than from Calcutta. I know it is wrong, pure robbery,

in fact, but I must send the message. As the rates from London are only one shilling per word to New York, all the rest, with the exception of our inland rate at home, goes to the lines between here and England, or to the operator's pocket here, which is much more likely.

The bazaars of Tiflis are commonplace, and, like most bazaars, dirty—but not picturesque in their dirt. In addition they are absolutely wanting in all that peculiar charm which makes those of Cairo and Tunis so delightful to wander through and linger in. Nor does one find here displayed all the thousands of attractive articles which in those other cities cause one to return laden to the hotel. Through the centre of the town, between deep walls of rock down which pours the sewage of the place, sweeps the river Kur, a most repulsive-looking stream.

I might have described this river and the cliffs as possessed of the beauty of Eden, but it would have been somewhat wide of the truth; I might have filled these bazaars with old silver, antique firearms and swords, and fairy stuffs of all sorts; laden their air with the perfume of the roses and lilies; made you drink delicious coffee and eat "Turkish delight" therein, while you stared at the veiled women and gorgeously costumed eunuchs; I might have described a mosque that would surpass that of Sultan Hassan. But I fear, had you come here and found the river and its cliffs repulsive, the bazaars full of all that is unattractive, the coffee and Turkish delight entirely lacking, also the mosque, you might have voted me a fraud. It will surely be

better to find this capital of the Georgians more pleasing than you had expected, and if you content yourself with the panorama she displays, you will vote her enchanting; for the world, I think, holds no more superb view than that presented by this city of Tiflis approached from the great Darial Pass over the Caucasus.

After the death of Tamara, Jenghis Khan swept like a black cloud over the valley, leaving such desolation and destruction that Tiflis has never recovered her ancient glory.

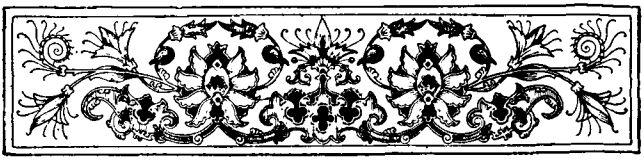
I met this morning, in the court of the hotel, an Englishman who has been living here for five years —at least he has lived in the country that length of time—and when I questioned him as to the climate he replied that, to those who lived here, hell possessed no further terrors—that is, in the matter of heat.

Trees of any size are unknown in Georgia. I noticed in crossing the Caucasus that nothing larger than a scrub was to be seen: no forests of stately pines near the summits, no dense groves of majestic trees lower down, no "aisles of the forest" spreading around one; plenty of green, but all so diminutive that even the telegraph wires are supported on rails from the railroad to which are bound sticks of timber certainly not more than ten feet long, but quite as long as can be found here or anywhere around here. The result is that refuse petroleum is the usual fuel.

I am awakened this morning by a burst of martial music, which draws me out into the fresh air, and I find that the town is all alive with soldiers wending

their way from all directions to the public square. At its entrance stands a small Russian church, and the music of the many bands becomes reverential and tender as they pass the holy icons, although their selections are somewhat singular. I confess to being somewhat shocked, and almost look to see one particular saint in a long purple garment strike into a skirt dance. But no; neither does he drift into a waltz as the tender notes of *Auf Wiedersehen* are wafted on the air. This is the anniversary of the day when Russia finally settled, in the conquest of Schamyl, the Caucasus question, in which she employed 180,000 men to conquer the 15,000 of that robber chieftain. Chief of Daghestan was Schamyl, and as Russia has obliterated that country, its very whereabouts will soon be forgotten. It included these mountains and the land to the north-east thereof as far as the mouth of the Volga. Schamyl was taken first to St. Petersburg, and then allowed to retire to Mecca, Russia knowing that the holy well in that city would end his life, as it very promptly did and has done for so many thousands. To-day his conquerors celebrate all this by holding high mass in the gardens here. The soldiers are arranged in a huge square and stand at attention as the general passes around in inspection.

Russia does not neglect the religious welfare of her troops. Daily attendance at service is required, and to-day her priests, gorgeous in green and gold and purple, hold high celebration of the sacred rite. Then one and all are blessed, and with a fanfare of trumpets the troops move off to their barracks.



CHAPTER VI

THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE—TIFLIS

THE traveller coming southward from the superb Darial Pass scarce realises, as his gaze sweeps southward, that he is looking upon the home country of the oldest civilised race on the globe. All to the south, almost to Mesopotamia, was Armenia and is still in parts the home of the Armenians, though they have become scattered over all this section of the world. We hear of them in the myths of the sixth century before Christ, and in Alexander's time. We hear of the province east and west from the Euphrates, to the east Asia Major, and west Asia Minor, of the conquest by Rome, of the advent of Christianity in 276 A.D. Before that these people had worshipped a mixture of the doctrines of Zoroaster, of Greek Mythology, and ideas peculiar to their country. They worshipped the Ormuzd of the Persians and a Venus whom they called Anaitis. The land was the prey of the greater nations east and west. The Arabian caliphs ran down upon it in 632 A.D., thereafter the land seems to have rested in comparative peace until the eleventh century. Then came the Mongols, followed by the Persians, and then the Turks, and now the Russians.

Yet through all these, these people have preserved their nationality, their faith, and somewhat of their ancient culture, at all times of a higher civilisation than their conquerors. Persecution has spread them far and wide, but the twentieth century finds the greater portion still in Asia Minor.

As I stroll through the quaint quarters of Tiflis and bargain with these people, I find myself gazing into their stolid, colourless faces, and wondering what is the secret source of their resistance to all outside influence since Bishop Gregory firmly established their faith in that long-dead third century.

They take their title of Gregorian from Gregory himself. They refuse to attribute more than one nature to Christ, and assert that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone; baptism must be conjoined with confirmation, and extreme unction administered immediately *after*, and not before death, and to ecclesiastics only. They worship the saints, but do not believe in purgatory. Pope Benedict XII. accused them of 117 errors of doctrine, but that disturbed them but little. While some of their nobility have acknowledged the supremacy of Rome, the masses have never done so. If you go to their churches you will hear the Mass in their ancient tongue, but the preaching in the new. If you bargain with them in their little shops they will sit off and watch you in a stolid sort of way, and you will obtain no advantage. They have been shrewd in the management of their national affairs and have fully understood the necessity of seeking protection from the dominant party,—sometimes the Turks and again the Russians, and often, because of the

incursions of the other Christian sects, both Catholic and Protestant. Yet how these people have suffered!—the late horrors in Asia Minor are still fresh in our memories and will be followed by others as terrible just as surely as one day follows another. However, to-day they seem quietly pursuing the paths of trade, and their masses are now sunken in superstition and ignorance.

TIFLIS

We spend our first Sunday in sleeping late into the morning and in a long stroll in the afternoon.

The hills which surround Tiflis are barren and drear to the point where they rise to the higher mountains. While every here and there an Armenian church is sharply silhouetted against their dun-coloured sides. The ruined walls of the ancient fortress crown an eminence in the centre of the valley, and as we pass along them the town itself spreads all round, some hundreds of feet below, with its flat red, green, and blue roofs offering the only bits of colour in all the prospect; but the most characteristic features are the round, lantern-like cupolas of the Armenian churches, rising here, there, and everywhere. Their sides are perpendicular and their tops like an old-fashioned extinguisher of tin.

This sect is, from an economic point, the backbone of Georgia, and is increasing rapidly.

There are comparatively few Russian churches in Tiflis, but those of this ancient people are many. Russia forces them to use her language, but she cannot bend them to her form of religion, and that

is indeed a thorn in her side. They are increasing rapidly and have more than doubled in numbers since the northern power conquered Tiflis. Their holy city is Etchmiazin, and the cathedral of that city furnishes the model for all these churches, which, be they large or small, are exactly of the same form,—a Latin cross with generally three round towers, one, large, in the centre and one on either side thereof, each surmounted by the cone of metal. In the interior are three altars, a centre and two side ones, immediately under the cupolas, and before each of which hangs, as in the temple at Jerusalem, a heavy veil, drawn aside at certain times.

By making this ancient sect feel that they are outnumbered by keeping them from office and by forcing the use of the Russian language, the Government of the Czar hopes finally to absorb them into the Greek Church, but the result is more than doubtful. The Empire dares not use greater force now, the occupation of this land having been a difficult step in the march south.

It is believed here that Russia is gathering for a move farther southward, and that it is but a question of a few years before she makes her southern boundary at the Arabian Sea, absorbing all of Persia, Turkey in Asia and probably in Europe, and Western China. England has often surrendered places once occupied,—has Russia ever done so? Does she not move steadily and irresistibly onward? Is not the sale to us of Alaska the only instance of a surrender of land once in her actual possession? Does any man believe that she will ever surrender

Manchuria, or, on the contrary, that Peking is not her ultimate goal?

I think in my visit to Tiflis eight years ago that I did not do justice to the modern Russian city, or rather that I did not notice it as it deserved.

It is all well built. The great street is magnificent in length and width. There are several museums, a fine palace and church, and an opera house that would do justice to St. Petersburg, and there are several theatres, but, as in every Russian city, the pavements are horrible.

This week in Tiflis has passed very pleasantly, and I shall depart to-night with a totally different impression from that which I carried away with me in '94. Truly, pleasant companions make a great difference. As for the Hôtel de Londres, I cannot too strongly express my content and satisfaction therewith. The people who keep it are Germans, the house is cleanliness itself, the table excellent, and the rooms most comfortable. In fact, I know of no hotel in Russia, those of the great cities not excepted, which can approach it. "Madame" realises the necessity in this land for absolute cleanliness if health is to be maintained, hence her rooms are covered with oil cloth, which is washed off each day. The Turkish mats spread over this are thoroughly shaken each morning. The beds are of iron.

I may seem to dwell too long, to make too much of all this, but those of my readers who have visited these far-off lands will understand what an oasis such a house is amidst the abominations called "hotels" throughout the Russian dominions. We are charged

seven roubles (about $3.50) per day, American plan, and the food is dainty and excellent.

I have seen but one Georgian woman that could be called a beauty. She was at the circus on Sunday. Her face was a pure oval, with large, black, antelope-like eyes, over which arched delicate eyebrows; a delicate, straight nose rose above a perfect mouth, and her complexion was beautiful. She wore a straight, broad gold band across her forehead and around her glossy black hair, which was bound down over her ears; from this band an emerald green veil fell far downward over a dress of the same colour. Both were of some soft stuff.

As a rule, however, the men are finer-looking than the women; many are superb specimens, and when robed in picturesque uniform present engaging pictures. Yonder is one superbly formed and surely six feet six in height. His face and beard would do justice to Darius the King, and the former is crowned by a most picturesque turban of silver-grey astrakhan fur. His coat is of the same colour, and falls to the top of his highly polished black boots, while across his breast are two rows of long, bright cartridges, and his sword has scabbard-handle and tip of gold. He is handsome and he knows it, possessing none of the usual ignorance on that point common to our sex. On returning to the hotel I find Casimir awaiting me with the information that all is arranged for our onward movement to-morrow.



CHAPTER VII

BAKU AND THE RIDE THITHER

CASIMIR ARMAGO, courier for all this section of the world, one-time dancing master and instructor of the *corps de ballet*, is now cook for a wandering American. He strongly resembles a wise old rat dressed in a fur coat and red cravat. His beady black eyes sparkle as his nose comes down over his mustache and his mustache goes up under his nose, and he ever assumes the first or second position, as he addresses his "patron," as he terms me. I pay him twenty-three francs a day, and I fancy that is but the beginning, as evidently I am not to be allowed to do anything save in grand style and fully befitting himself.

I was appalled this morning to find outside my door a hamper fully four feet square and as many deep, which he informs me contains *tout l'equipage de cuisine.* I do not doubt it, including a range and a set of laundry tubs. He mentions *en passant* a "dozen" plates and all else in keeping. Does he expect me to keep open house for the whole of Central Asia?

However, we shall see what we shall see. In the meantime I shall look with interest towards the

mounting of that hamper upon any horse that this Orient contains.

Casimir, whom we call Casimir Perea, is ubiquitous. I may think I have evaded him, but let me round a deckhouse or descend a staircase, however remote from where I last saw him, and there he is, salaaming deeply, having ranged the force of hotel or ship behind him and seeing to it that they follow his genuflections. I have attended so many of these state receptions, these drawing-rooms, during the past week that I am weary thereat, but see no hope of release until I vanish again into the far Occident.

True, I have danced a minuet once or twice during my life, and Court gestures and postures are not unfamiliar to me, but my movements are gaucherie itself when compared to those of my cook, and sometimes result in disaster, as, for instance, during the "drawing-room" just past I backed into and upset our fat landlady, who fell with a crash, but that noise in no way upset Casimir's self-possession, though destroying mine. I feel convinced that if I remain in his employment a year I shall be wearing robes and a crown.

At 8 P.M. we gather in the vestibule of the hotel, prepared to depart. Our piles of luggage have already gone forward in custody of one man, while another awaits our own outgoing. Madame and her sons bow us away with the wish that we may again come to Tiflis; if so, let us hope she will be here.

The winds roar and howl down this vast valley of Georgia, forcing us to hold tightly to hats and bags, as our droshky rushes over these rough pavements.

At the station is encountered the inevitable pandemonium. Our two guides fall out over our affairs, and resemble nothing so much as a couple of ancient fighting-cocks as they circle around each other. It requires moral suasion on our part to cause them to desist. Order is finally evolved out of the confusion and we make the train just in time.

A white-haired, pleasant-faced old gentleman entered our compartment last night with his arms laden with roses, of which he presented us with a handful. His smiles and flowers came like a rift of sunshine through the clouds, and he assists the flight of time by anecdotes of the land and of her people.

"This company is systematically robbed by its employees. It is a constant occurrence for the conductor to waylay people as they approach the booking office. After assuring them it is unnecessary to purchase tickets, he hustles them into the cars. For a rouble or so, which, of course, the company never receives, they travel as far as they like. All goes well unless an inspector happens to board the train and demand a look at the tickets. Then the dead-beats without them are hustled onto the roofs of the cars and told to 'lay low.' This happened not long since, but, unfortunately for the conspirators and the victims, one of the road guards, seeing the roof travellers, imagined that something was wrong and flagged the train. The sudden stoppage rolled the wretches pell-mell to the ground, broken legs, arms, and many bruises being the result. That stopped the nefarious traffic for a time, but it is in full swing once more."

Morning breaks over a vast expanse of licorice plains, from which our market is largely supplied with that sweet. The Caucasus range along to the north, rounded upwards dome on dome. The effects of brilliant lights and deep shadows are wonderfully beautiful. One never tires of the sight; in fact, I think the Caucasus hold a beauty peculiarly their own, and one never to be forgotten or confounded with that of any other range of this world, and surely around no other does romance and story cluster so thickly from the time of the Bible downward, for at Akstafa one is on holy ground, that being the junction for Ararat. Over this valley drifted the ark, and into this valley descended the inhabitants thereof. Mount Ararat rears its snowy crest one hundred versts (seventy-five miles) to the southward. It is believed by the natives to be haunted by genii. No man has ever ascended it, so *they* say, though the contrary is well known. The overland telegraph from London to Teheran leaves us here and starts south-eastward across the mountains.

Casimir has wonderful tales to relate concerning his prowess with the wild men of the mountains, amongst whom we are to pass. Perhaps it is all true, but one certainly has little to fear from anything, man or beast, that could be intimidated by Casimir. As we listen to his yarns, huge trains of oil-tanks pass constantly, showing our approach to that great source of Russia's wealth. The night has been cold, and the winds rose almost to a tempest.

As morning breaks, the melancholy landscape unfolds itself. Long, low mud hills, dark in colour,

settle downward to where the Caspian sparkles like liquid turquoise under the ever-increasing sunlight beyond it, and beyond our line of vision as yet lie the lands towards which we are going, the romantically mysterious lands of Persia and Turkestan. Off to the left rise the dark clouds of smoke which for ever hang over Black Town and its oil refineries, but below, near the sea, is the old fantastic city of Baku, "a place beaten by the winds," which to-day under this cloudless, brilliant sunlight moan and sigh, and ever and anon thunder and roar like a chorus of lost souls; perhaps the souls of some of the many millions that once inhabited the lands of Central Asia, the moans of the dead that sleep beneath the plains of Turkestan.

From her petroleum at Baku Russia could illuminate, paint, and lubricate all the world. This great industry from the shores of the Caspian has grown from 212,000 barrels in 1873 to 4,000,000 in 1881 and 81,000,000 in 1900.

Petroleum is used for fuel on all the steamers of this sea and upon all the railways in this section of the world. Petroleum-tanks stand like water-tanks all along the entire length of the Trans-Caspian Railway. A pipe-line now leads to Batoum on the Black Sea, and the railway thence appears to carry little else save trains of tank cars. Russia hopes to drive our Standard Oil Company from Europe and England's coal from all her dominion.

Peter the Great conquered and drove the Persians from this district in 1723 and was the first to appreciate the importance of petroleum. Persia received the land again from the Empress Anne,

but Russia finally and for all time re-occupied it in 1813.

From 1832 to 1850 the yearly production was one million gallons. It was in 1859 that oil was discovered in Pennsylvania, and in 1862 that State produced fifty times as much as Russia, or more than one hundred million gallons. This forced Russia to throw her industry open to competition with the result that the first year saw the production of oil more than doubled.

In the earlier days of the oil fields the expense of transportation was so great as to be almost prohibitory. The oil was ladled from the pool into which it had flowed into carts and so carried to the refineries in Black Town. The kerosene was then barrelled and shipped to and up the Volga and so to the railways.

The oil seems to be some 150 feet below the earth's surface.

Maroni tells us that it was not until 1875 that, through the Nobel Brothers, Russia began to profit by this source of wealth. Through their energy and perseverance pipe-lines and tank steamers were brought into use, but not until after a long fight against every sort of opposition. They were laughed at as fools, but persevered. It required a capital of about $3,000,000 in our money to start matters, and this they raised by their own exertions and asked for no subsidy. They have been tremendously successful and hold a monopoly of the trade.

A bulletin issued by the United States Geological Survey on the subject of Russian and American

petroleum production says since 1897 Russia has produced more petroleum than the United States, last year the output in Russia being 85,000,000 barrels and in the United States 69,000,000 barrels. The facilities for handling the large Russian product are at present crude, costly, and wasteful. The markets are far away from the production.

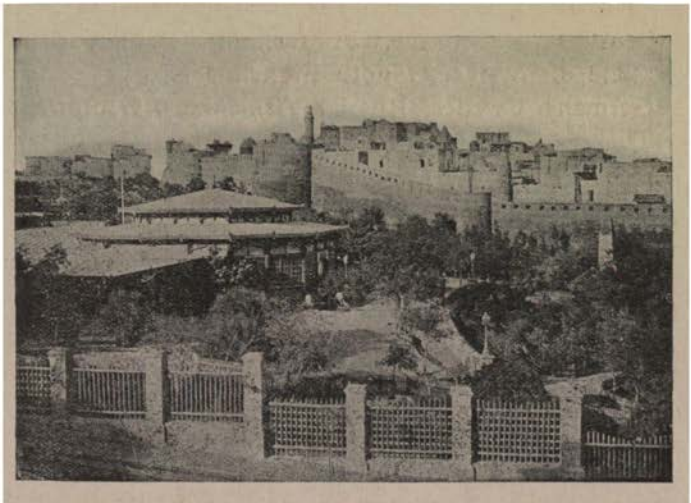
During 1900 Russia produced about 17,800,000 short tons of coal, the higher grades of which sell from $7.00 to $8.00 per ton. During the same year the United States produced about 270,000,000 short tons of coal. All the countries bordering on the Mediterranean are poorly supplied with fuel. Two-thirds of the total production of oil at Baku (about 81,000,000 barrels in 1900) now find a market as fuel oil. The total petroleum exports from Russia in 1901 were 428,657,210 gallons, and from the United States during the same year 1,062,750,306 gallons. The very great difference between the petroleum of the United States and that of Russia is shown in the statistics of refined petroleum. Of the total world's production of crude petroleum in 1901, 165,385,733 barrels, the United States produced 69,389,194 barrels, or 41.97 per cent., and Russia produced 85,168,556 barrels, or 51.49 per cent., and yet of the total production of refined petroleum of all grades in 1901, estimated at 1,500,000,000 gallons for all countries, the United States produced 911,120,944 gallons, or 60.7 per cent., and Russia 414,122,999 gallons, or only 27.7 per cent. Fom the above it is seen that Russia leads the United States as a producer of crude petroleum.

Modern Baku has banished the oil from her

streets, but in Black Town—a mile away—oil is everywhere,—in the gutters, in the mud of the streets, in the food one eats, and in the air one breathes! It would also be in the milk one drinks but for the fact that it has been boiled out. "We dare not drink raw milk here." Even the dogs, cats, and hogs running wild in the streets are streaked with the grease that oozes out of the pores of the earth. In places it spouts forth in such quantities and with such force that it has never been possible to utilise the entire production of Mother Earth. The great structures, or Black Town, loom darkly on the horizon, as one approaches from Tiflis—a mass of towers, scaffolding, and dense black smoke. We have just returned from a visit to one of them (having seen one you have seen them all), and for half an hour use our utmost endeavours to shake or brush off the fine, oily, yellow powder with which our clothes are saturated. There is little satisfaction, save to one particularly interested, in visits to such places—huge masses of machinery, vast lakes of oil, grease, and dirt saturating everything. Here and there is a spouting oil fountain, almost equal to "Old Faithful" in our Yellowstone Park. Over all hangs the dense pall of smoke. It is difficult to understand how the people manage to live there. Baku proper consists of a modern Russian city encircling an old Tartar town surrounded by a still perfect wall, which is something more than nine hundred years of age. Viewed from the sea old Baku is yet a city of the ancient khans. The grisly, grey walls climb the hill as though they would hide their very existence. The flat house-tops and

the cupolas of the mosques are dominated by the *svelte* minarets, the black masses of Bala-Hissar, and the Tour de la Jeune Fille. Near the port the modern world has crept in and is slowly advancing towards the old town. Already it has reached the foot of the hills and will doubtless continue its progress upward until a place typical of all the Orient shall have disappeared for ever. However, that change is still in the future, and to-day the traveller finds old Baku still sleeping on her arid, treeless hills, with the melancholy winds off the Caspian for ever howling over her, be the sky blue or stormy, while the country round about her is the acme of desolation. Within her streets one is depressed by the deathlike stillness characteristic of the Orient; an occasional donkey passes by with dainty tread, and perhaps a veiled figure may flit from door to door, but that is all. The streets, narrow and very crooked, are merely passages between high walls. Only the Moollahs on the minarets may look upon the inner life. You may encircle the city, and aside from a mosque or what was once a bazaar you will see nothing. The abiding-places of the dead alone tell you any story, and there, amongst the Tartar tombs, you will note one with a poignard and pistolet carved upon it. It is the tomb of General Tzitzianoff—assassinated by the Khan during an interview solicited for the regulation of the city. The murder occurred in Bala-Hissar, the ancient palace. These khans wanted no "regulations" save their own sweet will, backed and enforced by a sudden dagger-stroke or instant decapitation, after which the body was cast into an oubliette connecting with the sea. If it was your

fate to pass that way you were, indeed, "forgotten." Bala-Hissar, both palace and citadel, was constructed by Shah Abbas upon the ruins of a fortress of Hali-ben-Ibrahim, sovereign of Chirvan in 1420. The palace is of stone—Persian in architecture and carved in good style, especially its great portal. The interior, now used as an arsenal, is not of interest. However, in the audience hall one finds some arcades



OLD BAKU

finely executed, and, in the centre of this hall, a flagstone said to cover the mouth of the oubliette before mentioned. The walls of Bala-Hissar inclosed the two mosques. While one is in ruins the other shows a portal of exquisitely carved stone almost lacelike in appearance. The Armenian bazaars of old Baku are without character and uninteresting,

but the Persian bazaar, covered over, long, tortuous, and crowded with Asiatics, is most interesting to a painter. It occupies also an ancient caravanserai, which still shows some beautiful capitals on its columns. In the centre of the great place and near the well you will find some sleeping camels and the ever-present donkeys, while all around them flows the only life visible to the stranger in these Eastern towns. Every nation on earth would seem to have here a representative. As I sit in a shady corner, alone of my race, I note French, Italians, Greeks, Germans, Swedes, Russian Armenians, Georgians, Turks, Persians, Turkomans, and Sarts. For a wonder there are no Russians, nor do I often find many of that nation in such places. They are content with governing all these races and with making them live together in harmony, but for the rest they let them severely alone. The Orientals, while they visit in a curious mood the Russian quarters, are never at home there, and soon return to the precincts of their ancient city, where secrecy and seclusion still reign supreme. Nor will they ever become accustomed to a life open to the light of day, free for the inspection of all who pass by. In the ancient city, dirt is here, dirt is there, dirt is everywhere, and one would not enjoy it in the least were it otherwise. The modern town is clean and well kept.

The steamer hence for Enzeli leaves at 10 P.M., or thereabouts. We board her about nine, fighting our way through the motley gang that always attends the advent or departure of a ship in these seas. Not one-fifth are going on her, but all push and

crowd as though life depended upon their getting on board. She proves to be quite a comfortable craft, and we are soon settled in our cabins, where we promptly forget Baku and all else in sound slumbers.





CHAPTER VIII

STORMY VOYAGE—ENTERING PERSIA

THE Caspian Sea is destroying my recollection of it as a "placid lake." This morning it is roaring and howling around us in most tempestuous fashion, tossing our cockle-shell ship in all directions.

We are told that these ships are often unable to land at Enzeli, and must return to Baku. I trust that will not be our case. If it does happen, I shall go to St. Petersburg and wait until I can cross Siberia. Persia must hold over for another time.

The weather is cold even here, and I sit in the corner of the saloon wrapped up in a fur coat, and shall spend the day buried in the pages of the ever-interesting, ever-youthful Charles Lever. I found his *Charles O'Malley* in the hands of our English friend yesterday, and promptly confiscated it. If he wants it he is down below, too ill to make his wants known, and, besides, 't is better he continue his study of Persian,—there is nothing to be compared to the cultivation of the mind.

By noon the wind blows a hurricane and our ship is driven to shelter in a small harbour, where several other craft have taken refuge. It is sleeting hard, and the chances for landing at Enzeli are steadily

diminishing. We shall stay here all night. All day the tempest roars about us, a veritable blizzard,—snow and sleet in dense clouds cover the tossing waters. It is difficult to think of this as the Caspian Sea over whose placid surface I sailed in 1894, and around which the blistering desert crowds on all sides; to the east the "black sand," to the south the mountains of Persia; the desolate shores of Georgia and Russia to the west, while the north is bounded by vast morasses,—desolation everywhere; lands where the civilisation of this world had its birth, but from which all traces have passed away, leaving it to deathly silence and the wild tribes of Asia for the most part.

The storm holds us at anchor all day; the question of reaching Enzeli becomes a grave one, and the cause of continued discussions between the passengers in a dozen different languages.

We get off at 10 P.M., the ship covered with snow, which glistens under a bright moon.

There is a place, Astara, some two hours off, where we may land and from which it is possible to proceed on horses for some three days, but as our luggage is heavy it would be somewhat of a task and might be impossible,—let us hope to go on.

These ships carry the post, but that does not seem to make it necessary to deliver it into Persian hands. I am told that Teheran is sometimes without letters for two months at a time. However, the telegraph is in English hands and rarely suffers interruption.

As the weather clears and the sea quiets down towards midnight our craft is put full speed towards Enzeli, only to run into a tempest at that point,

which forces her captain to put on all steam for our safety, and morning finds us at Astara.

I discover on coming on deck that all traces of storm have disappeared, the water rolls lazily around us, the sky spreads a blue arch overhead, while mountains drop into hills, and hills into plains, all covered with a mantle of sparkling snow. The air is crisp and fresh, and certainly not unhealthy. A traveller never experiences in such an atmosphere, or in any degree of cold, that dread of illness, generally only too well founded, that oppresses him in tropical climates. As our captain announces that he returns from here to Baku, a question arises as to our movements. Personally I do not care to go back to Baku and return on this ship next week, especially as the chances—on this shallow and easily excited body of water—are most excellent for a repetition of our experience on this voyage.

Casimir vetoes our landing here and attempting to reach Enzeli by land; even when I tell him I shall not return from Baku if I go there, but go north, and he will lose his work thereby, he does not change his decision.

He has travelled with Alexander Dumas and Pierre Loti. The latter he did not approve of and left his service. Canon Farrar was also a patron of his, and therefore his opinions are to be respected.

This is becoming very tedious. Ship after ship comes in from the north, but none seem to answer our case. Some may go to Enzeli, but when? Others carry only deck passengers, and that in this land means something lower than the beasts, and many things one does not covet. So we roll all day

in an uneasy sea. Our captain does not understand why we object to going back to Baku, which is his Paris. Even as I write, a slab-sided, drab-nosed craft comes puffing out of the north, which, we are informed, will go to Enzeli. Whereupon a wild state of confusion ensues,—quite the wildest I have ever experienced.

After an hour's hard work we are dumped, bag and baggage, in a dhow. The currents here are very strong and threaten destruction to numerous anchor-chains; however, we escape to be taken to a ship of which we know nothing, certainly not the one we have intended to sail on, but our protestations are of no avail. Our Persian boatmen have minds of their own, and, what is more to the purpose, control the oars. So we bring up alongside of this strange craft, our men fighting and quarrelling, and descend upon an unsuspecting captain down in a cabin about ten feet square. We are told there is nothing to eat on board, but that is a small matter; here we are and here we remain.

Our late refuge has taken heels unto itself and already disappeared in the distance.

We certainly are deck passengers, but on a comparatively—mind that adjective—clean ship and the only one. Hence nothing matters greatly. Storm or sunshine we shall go to Enzeli and anchor until we do get ashore. After all, it is a great relief. It is always most disappointing to have to go back and wait,—anything, no matter how crude, so long as forward!

We are told that we have nothing to pay,—something strange in this twentieth century.

Though the mountains are covered with snow, as is, in fact, all the land to the water's edge, the air is balmy and delightful, while the sea rolls as lazily as in the tropics. We sit out on deck with perfect comfort, one on a coil of rope, another on the wet deck, and a third on a salt bag.

I think one's ships come in from sea more frequently in these far-off waters than at home. There, we look for our friends upon the great liners only, but here, an Arab or Persian dhow, a raft, a tank-ship, or a mail-boat answers the purpose, and if a sail is within sight you will be justified in looking for their coming thereon.

Our tank-ship in the Black Sea was luxury itself when compared to this craft,—which is so loaded outside and in as to make walking on its decks almost impossible.

There are but three bunks downstairs for six of us, but that does not trouble us any more than the lack of food. "The Lord will provide" was especially written for travellers in this section of the world. However, we will surely be on board but one night, unless the storm king makes us prisoners for an indefinite period. There are five of us in the cabin. Two sleep on the floor, and sleep soundly, notwithstanding the clanking of the rudder-chains and rattle of the screw, the latter just under my head.

Our fellow-passengers watch with intense interest Casimir's arrangement of my bed. It seems luxury itself to them, as they never carry such things, yet it is but a mattress, a pillow, and a blanket, to which I add my old companion, a great grey and black

shawl, given me by father when I started to college, now thirty years ago.

The night passes without incident, and without a roll of the ship, so we know that we shall land at Enzeli and not have to endure the tedious subsidence of a gale of wind.

As I come on deck at 6 A.M. the mountains of North Persia are marshalled along the southern horizon, while the Caspian spreads north, east, and west, a glowing, glassy mirror. The sky has not yet taken on the tints of dawn, and the constellations which shine down at home sparkle brilliantly above me. Suddenly, as though from internal fires, the long line of snow-peaks assumes a deep rich rose tint against a black sky, while the sea reflects the light and all the heavens blush with the morning; and as suddenly the sun rolls upward, the stars disappear, and the day is come.

A steam launch takes us shoreward to the custom-house, where we are met by the dragoman sent from Teheran by our minister, Lloyd Griscome, bringing letters and instructions as to our movements. It seems the Persian New Year comes on Friday, and if we would see the Shah and the fêtes we must use extra haste. As it is, we are two days late. However, we shall try it.

Enzeli, its entrance and lagoon remind one strongly of the port of Batavia in Java. Even the houses are tropical in appearance, yet the air is very cold and the mountains covered with snow. However, to Enzeli we give no thought or time, but push on to Resht.

If a Persian tells you that it will take one hour to

do anything, always allow three or four. To-day we are assured that two hours will bring us to Resht, —it takes six; but I anticipate.

After the customs we started up the wide expanse of the Moredah, or "dead water," in a small steamer behind which are towed several dhows, one of them holding our luggage. This Moredah is a vast expanse of dreary, shallow water cloaked with giant reeds. From north to south it is some twelve miles wide, but from east to west the distance is much greater. The sail is not unpleasant, but very cold, and we have had nothing to eat save tea at 6 A.M., —it is now 1 P.M.,—and tea it is to be until 6 P.M., as events prove.

After two hours in the steamboat, we again embark in our dhow, which carries the luggage, and, entering the Pera Bazaar River, for two hours more are rowed and tracked through a natural canal, passing through vast savannahs of miles and miles of Pampas grass, all dead now, but in season it must present a beautiful sight. Nothing breaks the dead swampy level until the distant mountains are reached. Overhead and far away thousands of wild duck take their flight across the sky, while here and there a stately heron wings his way towards the rising moon.

The Persian boatmen have the same mournful chant as the Arabs, and it rises and falls now in melancholy cadence as we glide on, or changes to shrill cries as we pass the many native boats.

Save for one fight between our men and those of a rival boat, the sail to Pera Bazaar is uneventful, but on reaching there a battle royal for an entrance



97 PERA BAZAAR

to the only flight of steps commences. The authority of a courier of the Shah gains us the day and we land upon the most filthy spot of earth I have ever seen, and my experience in that line has not been limited. Slimy mud, of an unknown depth and dreadful smell, almost swamps us, while we are in imminent danger of being ridden down by numberless filthy horses driven or beaten by men infinitely more filthy.

I know just what to expect in the Orient. I have spent many winters therein, and have seen it all, but so far, from Algiers to Kashgar and on through China, I have seen nothing so filthy, so disgusting as this Pera Bazaar ("Old Man's" Bazaar), the dreadful road to Resht, and Resht itself, but again I anticipate.





CHAPTER IX

THE HIGH ROAD FROM RESHT THROUGH KASVIN

PERA BAZAAR is the most southerly point to which boats can reach, and all the merchandise from the Caspian to Teheran must pass through this point. There is a weir here, where, I am told, enormous quantities of fish are captured,—some statements place the number at fifty thousand daily (?). Amongst them are carp four feet long, salmon, and salmon trout. The sturgeon is caught lower down, also the sterlet. The lower classes use the coarse flesh of the sturgeon, which here are some seven and nine feet in length, but the isinglass and caviare are the only parts of value.

We wait in the vile bazaar until our luggage—and ourselves—are loaded on to crazy traps, when we jolt off over the road to Resht. The mud and holes are so deep that destruction seems several times inevitable. This road was constructed after the last war with Russia, when her armies tried to penetrate to Resht, but the impassable forests and the fever drove back the legions of the Czar. This was at one time a district of silkworms and silk production, but that industry is not great now, though there is much tobacco raised.

Resht is supposed to possess the most fatal climate on earth. In summer the fever is deadly. If reports are correct the surrounding forests must be a heaven for sportsmen,—pheasants, partridges, wolves, jackals, lynxes, hyenas, and the tiger are to be found. The town itself is an ugly, uninteresting place, but embowered in luxuriant vines and brilliant flowers,—all beautiful to look at, all deadly to remain in or near.

The Russians occupied Resht one hundred and sixty years ago, and cleared out much of the surrounding timber. In 1830–31 the plague swept through it like a tempest, carrying all before it. The silk trade alone kept the place alive,—then that collapsed, and fortune fled until the cultivation of rice and cotton in a measure restored it, and the place now numbers some thirty thousand inhabitants. Being on the only high road from the north into Persia, it could and should be a place of importance, but in no other country can one find the great entrance thereto in such a miserable condition. Shabby neglect describes the whole of the dominions of the Shah. Persia has believed that by the barriers of nature (that bar at Enzeli), the shallow lagoons, impenetrable forests, and fever-stricken coast, she has been secure from northern incursion, especially that of Russia,—but the way from Georgia through Tabriz is open and of easy passage.

The best hotel in Resht is a vile affair, one to be avoided if possible. We are forced to spend the night there and are nearly famished before dinner is served. From our balcony the panorama over this Persian town shows an expanse of snow-covered

roofs; bazaars line both sides of the narrow streets, and the people are at tea.

There is a strange sort of amusement going on; a dozen heaps of hay down the centre of the street have been set on fire, and the men and boys are leaping through the flames; one has been shoved over and has fallen flat in the midst of a blazing pile, but he does not take fire. I fancy his clothing is so soaked with wet filth that it cannot ignite.

This place, because of the fever which prevails from June to November, is called "death" to all Europeans who pass by. We shall have to travel night and day if we would reach Teheran on time, but find we cannot start until 4 A.M., and our landlord prophesies that it will be 8 A.M. Knowing post-road people I agree with him, though the guide threatens dire punishment if we are not off at the former hour.

The night is bitterly cold, with a dampness that penetrates one's marrow, forcing all the wraps into use and still leaving us to shiver. It is always well to protect one's flannels from dampness. I do so by taking mine under the bed-covers; in the tropics the mosquito net answers the purpose.

Four o'clock found us all sound asleep, and no sounds of life anywhere. At five I awake and rouse the others. Poor old Casimir comes chattering and assures us that if we attempt to travel at night we shall die. I find the other guide who was to have had us *en route* at five sound asleep amongst a lot of natives in the courtyard, and secure in his belief that I could not tell him from any one of the rest, but his leggings gave him away, and I had small compunc-

tion as to rousing him. We are a long time in getting started. The luggage is weighed as carefully as on a Continental railway.

Our train consists of a van and two broken-down broughams, each drawn by four horses abreast, and for the next three hours we are jolted over a road that might be better and worse; it 's heaven, however, by comparison with the one from Pera Bazaar. All the country is white with snow, something unprecedented in Persia. The fall was eighteen inches, and now the land is fast becoming a vast lake under the warm rays of the sun. How purity and corruption intermingle in this world! As my carriage pauses a moment I note a snowbank of dazzling white, melting into a perfect slough of vileness, too disgusting to be described, while from beneath the edge of the snow peer some violets of heavenly purity and deepest blue, and a vine overhead casts a wreath of snowy blossoms downward. Surely corruption has put on incorruption, and most of these mortals appear quite ready to put on immortality, though not, perhaps, of a heavenly cast. We stop for our first change of horses in a typical post-house of the Orient,—all dirt and filth.

For the first six hours our way leads over these drenched plains. This road to Teheran is the only highway, and we meet numerous trains of camels and the ever-patient donkey. We pause a moment in full view of the great mountains of the Elbruz range. The sun shines brilliantly; trees and flowers are budding and blossoming. The snow has vanished save from the higher peaks, and the air comes fresh and laden with the perfumes of spring.

So long as our road lies in the valley our horses plod along at a slow pace, but we no sooner commence to ascend the hills than they break into a wild gallop and keep it up mile after mile. Why the rickety old carriages don't fall into fragments passes one's understanding. The highway is well built and well cared for, a contrast to the wretched post-roads of Central Asia. I fancy this is passable at all seasons, while there a verst a day in bad weather is sometimes rapid progress.

We are often one thousand or fifteen hundred feet above the river,—the "Sefia Road,"—and at night accidents are of frequent occurrence, and we now understand why our host at Resht was so opposed to our travelling after dark.

By noon we have left the fever-stricken rice swamps, and ascended so far into the hills that all is changed, and one seems transported to Bible land and days.

Over fields just turning green camels are passing; shepherds are tending their flocks; groves of olive trees lend a solemn aspect to the scene, while the sky is fair and blue, with fleecy white clouds drifting hither and thither.

The landscape changes and grows wilder as we mount, until before dark Casimir is shooting at wolves, and the jackals are barking at the moon. Up to nine o'clock we have covered about fifty miles of the 240 which intervene between Resht and Teheran. We have about completed the crossing of the range, and the forests of the northern slopes have disappeared. The prospect is barren and desolate, and from here southward to the far-off Persian Gulf

the land is devoid of trees save where there is water.

"Menfhi" at 9 P.M.—we stop for an hour and allow Casimir and the other guide to get us some supper. After having eaten practically nothing for two days, beefsteak and boiled eggs taste very good, and as the post-house seems clean,—wonderful to relate!—and we have a roaring wood fire, the time goes pleasantly, but we must move onward.

The night passes as night must in a jolting, rickety carriage; sleep comes in snatches, and I awaken to find a grave and stately camel gazing in at my window, while off and away his brethren cover the moonlit plains, and the sounds of their many bells fill the night with music, that soft music of Asia which covers the vast Continent from end to end, which will haunt your dreams and go with you into paradise.

Fitz M——e tells us the meaning of the music. In days gone by, an honest Shah tried to serve his Sultan, but he made no progress and less money, while those around him stole their pockets full with perfect impunity. So he asked his servant the reason, who replied, "Take advice from the camel."

"From the camel! what do you mean?"

"Well, the deep-toned bell on the leader booms out, 'Steal, steal, steal,' the lesser on the centre camel clangs out, 'Where shall we steal, where shall we steal?' while the answer comes from the tinkling, clattering bells far in the rear, 'Steal right and left, steal right and left.'"

The lesson was adopted. As I listen to the legend the moonlight fades away and all the distant

valleys far down below us are full of dancing shadows in wild carnival which flee away as the glorious cloudless Eastern day breaks suddenly.

A vast train of Erzerum camels pass us in the early morning decked in gorgeous array. The leader bears a stately plume of many-coloured worsteds, while his arched neck is festooned with wreath after wreath of brilliant colours, and his hump carries a pagoda of deep-toned bells, fantastically draped and glowing with all the hues of the rainbow. There must be a hundred camels in the train, all decked out in like manner, and bearing also many bells. As the sun rises their trappings glow with colour and the bells take on a gladder sound as in welcome to the lord of day.[1]

The scene is very brilliant, but to me the mysterious night shows the camel to its best advantage; stately and majestic, it moves silently along, seemingly part of the shadows around it, and when the plain is filled with thousands, as it was last night, the effect is weird and fantastic to a degree.

But the camel does not possess the land alone.

The patient donkey is always here, nor does he lower his head or yield one iota of his dignity or position to his more majestic companion. Here is one by my window, regarding me with ears pointed forwards and eyes full of question. "Have you, a Christian, forgotten that it was one of my kind, and not the stately camel, that carried the Child and His mother into the land of Pharaoh? Do you not remember that picture called *Repose*, wherein Mary and the Child lie asleep between the arms of

[1] See frontispiece.

a sphinx, Joseph is tending a fire whose smoke rises straight up in the still air of Egypt, while my ancestor keeps constant watch and ward together with the stars above?"

"No, I have not forgotten. I remember, too, that it was on one of your kind that the Saviour of mankind made His triumphal entry into the Holy City, but why, after so much glory, are you reduced to your present place in the world?"

To this question he answers not, but waving his ears in salutation, passes onward, and unlike mankind will do his duty to the end. Last night one of the little fellows collapsed under his load of sacks and sorrows and lay prone in the road, surrounded by all the stately caravan, and I must say that there was much concern over his condition.

After all, the Russians do understand travelling in such countries. I had much to say against the tarantass when in Central Asia, but I discovered last night that it was the proper thing, and greatly wished that I had here the one I left in Samarkand. It was not possible to sleep at all last night, this vehicle being of the landaulet order, but in a tarantass one lies at full length. Were it not that this is a well-built road, my trap would have collapsed long since. Later, through the state of the road after the snow, we are forced to get out and walk, and then we wonder more than ever how these traps hold together.

The landscape is dreary and very barren,—not a tree or shrub, nor any grass, but the latter will appear a little later.

One wonders, so far, in looking over Persia, why

Alexander took the trouble to conquer it, and one also wonders what strange influence the Shah was under which induced him to have this road built. Later on the latter is clear to us.

The higher we climb, the more desolate the prospect. There is nothing living in sight now, save some vultures floating over a dark valley, while the winds howl drearily. The work becomes harder for the poor horses, as they are mere skeletons.

The summit at last! and to the southward as far as the eye can reach spread the plains of the Medes and Persians,—save for a few of its cities unchanged since the world began, and with nothing in sight to indicate the twentieth century, except a long line of telegraph poles.

The plains of Persia are certainly not beautiful; even at this season—March 20th—there is little or no green, and when the heat comes they must be desolate and blinding with dust. And yet to me these plains of the Far East are at all times fascinating. So much might come out of the mirage for ever quivering above them. It seems full of the souls of the dead millions who have passed this way.

At 5 P.M. we reach Kasvin, sixty thousand people, our first large town, as wretched as most cities of the Orient, and exactly like all the rest,—miles of one-story bazaars lining a narrow street, the centre of which is a cesspool of the vilest sort; open squares now and then, and here and there a Madrassi—with the colours one finds in Central Asia, turquoise blue, dark blue, and yellow.

Kasvin—in fact, every city and town on this northern frontier of Persia—is indeed a fortress,

and until Russia conquered the Turkomans, their incursions and raids were of constant occurrence. That is all over now, and these gates stand for ever open. It is like a scene from the days of Abraham to pass one of them. Round its portals sit the white-robed elders and Moollahs—white-turbaned and long-haired, placidly smoking, while they are waited upon by brightly dressed attendants. A few camels stand near by in stately meditation, and some donkeys wait just round the corner. The rush and roar of life touches nothing there, where all is as it has been for thousands of years. In the mountains near Kasvin was once the robber castle of the chief of the Assassins, called the "old man of the mountain," miscreant Mohammedans, governed for 160 years by a line of chiefs who exacted and obtained blind obedience. There was a secret garden into which these youths were introduced, drugged, fitted with all that goes to make a Mohammedan paradise. On awakening they were taught that they had passed through death. They held the doctrine of the transmigration of souls and considered the chief as the vicar of God. This sect was exterminated by Holayon Khan, grandson of Jenghis Khan.

My carriage collapses in Kasvin, and if the substitute carries me over a level road to Teheran, it 's more than I expect. If I go beyond the capital, I shall be forced to purchase a tarantass.

Kasvin was the first capital when Persia was reconquered from the Arabs. The city is a great square, with the usual mud walls and tiled gateways.

The chief of the guild of merchants passes through the Serai, as we sit here, and gravely salutes us.

He is a great swell and makes stately and slow progress, attended by several other lesser lights. In stature above the middle height, heavy in weight, he wears a long black beard and high Persian fez of Persian lamb's wool, black. To him are referred for settlement all disputes in this mercantile world.

It appears, after all, that the highway from here to



KASVIN GATE, TEHERAN

Resht is a Russian road, built by a company from that country, under a concession, hence its good condition. I thought it did not look like Persian work. From Kasvin the road is Persian, or, in other words, no road at all, merely a track across the desert, whose sands, fortunately, are hard as a floor.

The post-houses are so forlorn that we decide to push on all night, and so spend another twelve

hours shaking about, but we reach Teheran about 2 P.M., and the journey is done. As you approach the city the quivering mirage resolves her mud walls into the plain itself until, save for one yellow dome to the southward, there is no town visible. Then the Kasvin gate looms up before you. Its green and white tiled walls are pierced by an archway over which the Persian lion, gaily coloured, stands guard, and above which waves the banner of this Far Eastern State, the oldest kingdom on the earth, how ancient one realises when one hears that diplomatic relations have been *resumed* with Greece—after two thousand years.





CHAPTER X

TEHERAN AND THE AMERICAN EMBASSY

TEHERAN is a fortified octagon of some eleven miles in circuit. Situated in the hollow of the plain, the desert presses close around and, rolling on, rises in yellow hills ending in a range of yellow mountains to the north and east, monotonous except where the peak of Demavend, a perfect cone, soars nineteen thousand feet upward into snow-land, the one beautiful object in all the desolate landscape, save perhaps the ever-fair blue sky which bends above it.

Off to the south and west the plain of yellow sand stretches away illimitable, mysterious, vast, taking on strange shapes and dancing shadows with every change of light. A green dome to the south is the only point of colour in all the city, and there is no sign of life, save some floating vultures low down against the yellow hills. It is to the late Shah Nasr-ed-Din that Teheran owes her present dimensions; before his reign her circuit was not five miles—now it is eleven. Of course, his mud walls and waterless moat are useless as defences, but with the twelve stately and certainly gayly decorated

gateways, the whole makes a brave showing, though there is not a gun anywhere to be seen.

Passing under the Kasvin gate we enter a wide, dusty street bordered by high mud walls, through which gateways here and there afford us glimpses of dusty gardens. Down the long length of the street and down the long length of the many streets which we cross there is scarcely a sign of human or animal life, nor is there sound of any sort. It is only when we enter the Legation quarters where the sentries greet us that life is evident, and when we finally roll into the court of that of our own land, we are too weary to care whether the town is a place of the dead or living.

Like all Eastern cities the life of Teheran centres around its bazaars,—that is the Oriental life. Our entrance and drive to the Legation leads us across a corner of the town and away from its life, but the life is there. The foreign business quarter clusters around the great square, where you find fine banks and many good shops with plate-glass windows. Down one street rattles a tram-car and flings its jingling noises over the very walls of the royal palace, which in Teheran occupies a vast space in the centre of the city.

Ground is not at a premium in this Eastern capital, and each Legation possesses an entire block; ours—which, by the way, is only ours because Mr. Griscome pays for it himself—is a pleasant and rather a pretentious structure, its main front being shaded by a stately columned portico running the entire length of the house. There is a pleasant garden, and there are several interior courts with basins of

water therein. The rooms are many and large, and all delightfully furnished—again, not by the United States Government, but by Mr. Griscome.

Here we were warmly welcomed, and here we shook off the dust of the journey, and then sat down to a most welcome breakfast—just how wel-



AMERICAN LEGATION, TEHERAN

come you will never know until you spend three days on an Asian post-road, and live on tea.

Later in the day we stroll over to the British Legation, and meet Sir Arthur Harding, one of the great men of England's foreign service, a very interesting personage, with a charming wife. Save for a beggar or two, we see no one either going or coming.

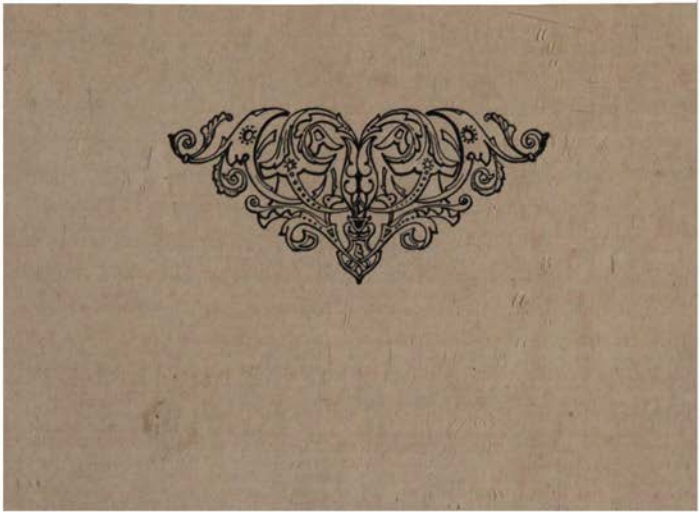
Returning as the shadows begin to fall one is im-

pressed with the beauty of this situation. The long chains of mountains gilded by the departing sun, the strange Oriental city, the sense of remoteness, rendered the more intense by one long, wailing cry and the bark of a solitary dog—all is so silent, so intensely silent, and so far from home.

Did you know that there is an etiquette in the matter of lanterns? There is such, at least in Teheran, and if you go out at night, which, by the way, you may not do after 9 P.M. without a permit, your rank is indicated by the size of the lantern carried before you. A householder must always keep an assortment of different sizes, and woe betide him if an error in the bestowal thereof is made!

An American cannot but feel indignant at the procedure of his Government towards our ministers and consuls. It is a fact that our consular service more than pays all the expenses of both diplomatic and consular service, in fact returns some cash to our treasury; yet our ministers and consuls are paid salaries so small that if they have no funds of their own they are paupers wherever they go. Here, for instance, Mr. Griscome has a handsome establishment, but he pays the bills himself, and this is the first time our country has had a proper legation in Persia — in that respect, I mean. We are the laughing-stock of all the world, and yet we waste money by the millions. This all arises from the ignorance of our Congressmen in regard to what is necessary to common decency in such matters. Their provincial ignorance is such as to make us blush before the world. If we claim to be a great nation we must be properly represented abroad, and this

cannot be done unless we pay for such service and properly house our representatives. Our last minister lived in rooms over a shop. When one thinks of the many millions wasted on our pension list and many other objects, and compares it with our penurious course towards our foreign representatives one's indignation cannot but be great and lasting. It is not possible for men who have never left America, or at best have been only to Europe, to comprehend the state of affairs in our new possessions, and form just laws concerning them. Yet such men are constantly to the fore in such matters. That the Philippines or Hawaiian Islands can be governed by the laws applicable to a little New England or Indiana village is absurd, yet that is just what is being demanded, and men elected from such places will not hesitate to promulgate the most absurd codes for those far-off islands.





CHAPTER XI

THE PALACE AND A PRESENTATION AT COURT

IT is ridiculous and uncomfortable this morning to don full dress, but a presentation to His Royal Highness the Shah would not be permitted without it. So, cold as it is, I manage to do so, and then cross the court to breakfast. I find his excellency, the American minister, at the table, and we are soon joined by the rest of the household.

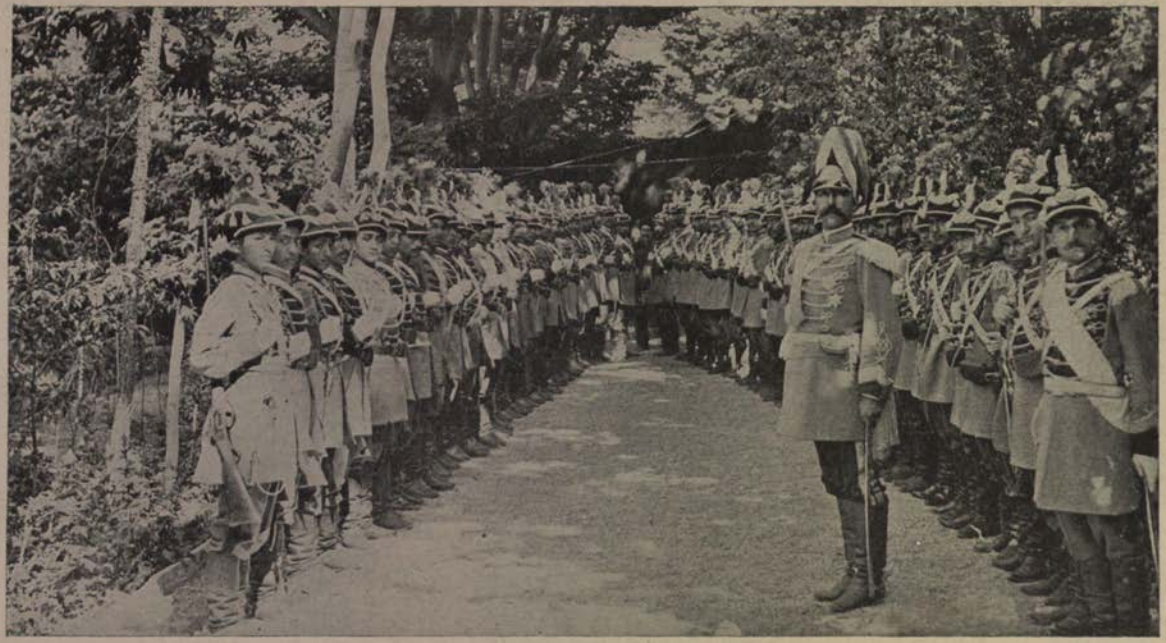
At 10.30 we are *en route* for the palace. It is merely—this morning—a reception by the Shah of the diplomatic corps. So we start with Mr. Griscome under conditions of more state and ceremony than I have ever before observed at any American Legation. The carriage is an ordinary victoria with two men on the box, but we are attended by six others, and all are in bright scarlet uniforms with gold cords thereon. Advocate of Jeffersonian simplicity, hold up your hands in horror at this display by a representative of our republican simplicity! You doubtless will, and will enforce the gesture by loud-voiced condemnation, all of which will arise from your utter ignorance of matters foreign, or of things requisite in Oriental lands. Our country is almost unknown to these Persians, who judge

altogether by outward show. If it is not made, our representative is slighted and put upon as coming from a poverty-stricken people, and hence not worthy of any respect, poverty being a crime is treated accordingly. A little display causes a complete change, a display that costs about nothing, yet, as is



GOING TO COURT, TEHERAN

evident to me this morning, the effect is great. We are received with evident satisfaction and deep salaams by the crowds in the streets. As our carriage rolls down the avenue of Diamonds and approaches the entrance to the palace, the streets become thronged with the turnouts of the different ministers and their many retainers, with countless soldiers, and surrounding all and ever present the



COMPANY OF PERSIAN SOLDIERS

Eastern multitude, and the Eastern beggars. Brilliant display goes ever cheek by jowl with misery.

The great Palace of Teheran is a vast inclosure of courts, passages, and salons, most of them gaudy in the extreme, and one is more and more impressed by the passion these Orientals have for brilliant colours, combined with their total disregard of quality. Paper cambric, or paper of the proper hue, will serve their purpose as well as velvet and gold.

Descending at the gateway we pass into a courtyard surrounded by one-story buildings, which here and there rise into pagodas of several stories in height. Here are some rows of trees, a few shrubs, and a great oblong tank filled with water in the centre. At the far end hangs a vast curtain, which I am told conceals the throne, but the present Shah does not use it, being afraid of assassination. The whole space is crowded with soldiers, but passage is instantly given to our minister, and as I have the pleasure of walking with him I see all at the best. Several courts are passed, one of which is ablaze with tulips, while gilded animals and urns add to the colour.

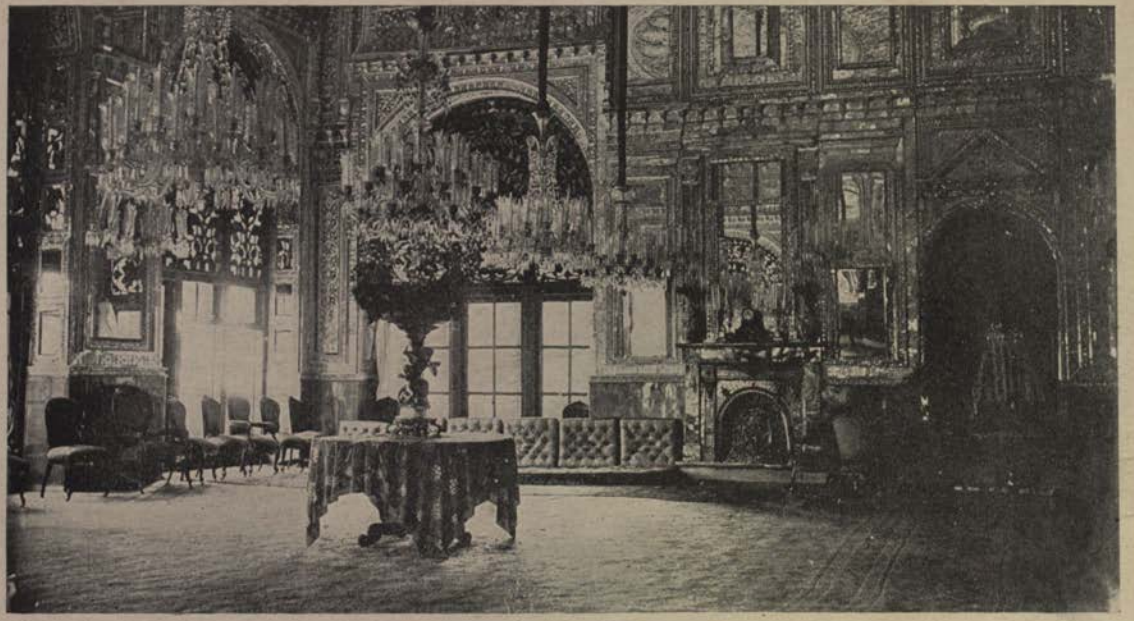
We are received by the Grand Vizier in a small salon, and there, in company with the entire diplomatic corps, wait our summons to the presence. All are in court dress, and the scene is brilliant. One's eyes naturally seek out the English and Russian ministers as being those having the most to do with Persia, and here they stand just before me.

His Majesty's minister, Lord Arthur Harding, wears a dark uniform covered with gold lace, and

possesses the usual frank, open, British face, but I examine with greater interest that of the representative of the Czar, an elderly man, rather undersized, wearing a dark coat covered with embroidery, gold lace, and decorations. His face interested me more than his uniform—one of those cold Russian faces, bluish-green eyes and a delicate mouth, both very cruel in expression to my thinking, though I know nothing about his disposition. The other ministers were mere sidelights to these men, they representing the two Governments most interested in the fate of Persia.

We must wait here until summoned to the presence, but the time passes with interest, not only concerning the brilliant assemblage around us, but also because of the panorama of Oriental gorgeousness spread before the window. Throngs of soldiers pass and repass, all in colours as brilliant as colours can be, all, save the officers, wearing shiftless, slovenly uniforms to our thinking, yet quite the best dressing which I have ever seen in the East. There are many in white with brilliant turbans. Yonder goes a company in bright green and black, with head-dresses reminding one of a poll-parrot. Beyond is a gigantic officer, chief of the Cossacks—a very handsome man, a Russian, but in this service —in a black uniform and astrakhan turban, his coat laden with decorations. Near him stands an Italian officer, also in this service, gorgeous in scarlet and white.

Down the court spreads a shallow basin with fountains and some swans, while gilded statues stand around its rim. Through the scant foliage one sees



125 CRYSTAL SALON, PALACE OF TEHERAN

a background of shifting colour, a high blank wall, some towering pagodas, and off and away against a blue sky the range of the snow-clad Elbruz. The whole as I gaze upon it reminds me of countless opera bouffes, the *Grand Duchess* especially. But —we are summoned, and the chamberlain, in cashmere gown and black turban, takes his wand to head the procession. This wand, which one would like to steal but that it is long and heavy, is encrusted its entire length with diamonds, while the head is a large emerald quite an inch in length. Down through the courts and gardens, surrounded by the gay throngs, we make formal procession, and passing through the main entrance hall of the palace —a long conservatory full of trees and plants and with a running brook down its centre—we mount a stately staircase covered with rugs and lined on either side with soldiers, who present arms as we pass them, and are ushered into the hall of audience —really a very splendid apartment of great size. It is walled and ceiled in mirrors in arabesque designs. There are crystal chandeliers from Venice, marble mantels, soft rugs, many presents of Sèvres and Dresden, malachite and lapislazuli, while in a large glass case stands the famous globe. It was constructed under the immediate supervision of the late Shah, and is quite a yard in diameter. The continents, well represented, are in rubies, while the oceans and seas are in emeralds, and the lakes in sapphires. Every bit of it, from standard upward, is encrusted in jewels. The effect as the bright light strikes it, is resplendent, but here comes His Royal Highness.

We are lined up to receive him, the ministers, with the Russian minister at their head coming first, while we stand directly behind our own representative. The doors open before us and in walks a heavy-set, under-sized, dark-eyed man of fifty-five, with black hair streaked in grey, and wearing a drooping black mustache,—the Shah, absolute ruler of all Persia. Leaning on a cane he advances, attended by his interpreter only. Like most Oriental faces his is a blank as to expression, but I am to learn later that that is only a masque. His dress is simple, all black with a red cord here and there, and a black astrakhan turban, but one is lost in amazement at the jewels on the royal person. In the centre and front of the turban is an immense diamond, the mate of the Koh-i-noor (as it was originally), surrounded by four others of lesser size, and above this rises the egrette of delicate white feathers, glittering with smaller stones. Each epaulet of gold bears four diamonds the size of English walnuts, but flatter. Down the front of his coat is a row of seven or eight of equal size, while on either breast hangs a decoration formed of four rows, eight in a row, of diamonds, each quite as large as a shilling. I notice that the lower row on one side is very yellow, though that does not detract from their beauty. His sword, scabbard, and belt are encrusted in jewels, and one looks down expecting to see gems on his shoes, but his feet are simply shod in patent leather. Of course there is also much gold lace. The effect of the whole is gorgeous in the extreme, and the value is placed at many millions.

One cannot but reflect that the price of one of



MUZAFFER-ED-DIN, SHAH OF PERSIA

those stones on his shoulder would relieve all that abject misery, poverty, and disease howling at the outer gate—you can hear the voices even here if you listen.

Commencing at the upper end of the line, His Royal Highness has a few words with each minister, all the while maintaining a perfectly blank expression, and then, bowing slightly, passes again within the doors, which close upon him, and the general salaam is over. No one leaves, however, as it is his custom to summon several of the ministers in succession to that inner room, and then the presentations take place. To-day that honour is bestowed upon three only, those of Russia, England, and America.

When our turn comes, Mr. Griscome leads us into the presence and we find the Shah standing by a table. After a few words with Mr. Griscome, the latter presents Fairchild, lately come out as his secretary. Then I advance a few steps and bow as my name is uttered. Mr. Griscome rather enlarges upon my travels and writings thereon, whereupon the expression of the royal face changes at once, his grey eyes light up with a twinkling, and he looks at me with apparent interest. When I smile he returns the smile and continues to do so through an unusually long interview. It seems he is greatly interested in travel, and the fact that I have covered the greater part of the world, and am now to do the same for Persia, seems to interest him very much, and he asks that I send him whatever I have written or will write. From the itinerary which Mr. Griscome gives him of my Persian tour, I must spend the next

five years in this Eastern land at least, a thing which I certainly shall not do. In fact, I only expect to see Northern Persia.

With a bow he dismissed us, and we retired backward. I noted as we vanished through the portal that his eyes again lost lustre and expression, and his whole face assumed a very weary expression.

I suppose there is always trouble in his kingdom, and I understand that the district of Shiraz is the disturbing province just now. Then, again, he wants and expects to leave shortly for Europe, but to do so must make a heavy loan from Russia. To this the Moollahs (priests) and people are bitterly opposed, as they greatly object to his getting any deeper into the grasp of the bear. It is said to-day that he must heed these remonstrances.

I was so engaged with his personality, that I scarcely observed the room we were in, but it was nothing out of the ordinary.

The rest of the day was passed in one of the salons overlooking the garden. Here were gathered all the foreign colony, that is, the ministers, their wives, daughters, sons, and friends; and here the Shah came,—a most unusual proceeding, as women are never received,—and spoke to all the ladies. Then he retired to another room overlooking the gardens, and the troops passed in review before him. We could not see him, and it is said that he was visible but once to the people, when the court poet read a poem. Again the opera bouffe began, and to the tune of Sousa's marches the troops of Persia passed before the throne. Money was distributed to most of them, gold to the officers and silver to



133 GARDENS OF THE PALACE, TEHERAN

the men. Then the day was over,—the Persian New Year.

Not for another year will the Shah come out of his shell, except in his coming tour to Europe, and one scarce fancies that he can enjoy that very greatly, save as a child would enjoy a show. He certainly must and will be a thing apart. Europeans will not tolerate his customs, nor have they forgotten their experiences with the former Shah, back in 1873, when, during his progress, he left wreck and ruin wherever he was entertained, even to the stealing of the silver and cutting to pieces of hangings. Italy alone profited by the sorrows of the other countries, and turned him into a palace out of which everything of the least value had been taken. Of course, I fancy his suite were more to blame than their monarch, but they were simply carrying out the customs of their country, where there is nothing which does not belong to the Shah. Why, then, should a different rule be applied to the infidels of Europe? To rob them would certainly be an acceptable act in the sight of Allah. Surely the ruler of the ancient Empire of Persia was god above all when compared to the mushroom monarchs of Europe.

Again we pass down through the gaudy courts, pass the outer gates, enter our carriages, and are surrounded by the misery of the people. Horrid faces and hands reeking with disease, vile rags, and filth are everywhere. Surely life is made up of contrasts.

Under the streets of the city runs the water-supply, and every here and there one comes across a

great hole in the middle of the road, dangerous for horse and man. Every description of filth passes into these openings, and this water the people drink. Can you wonder that fearful epidemics prevail? Cholera holds a wilder carnival in Teheran than in almost any other spot on earth.





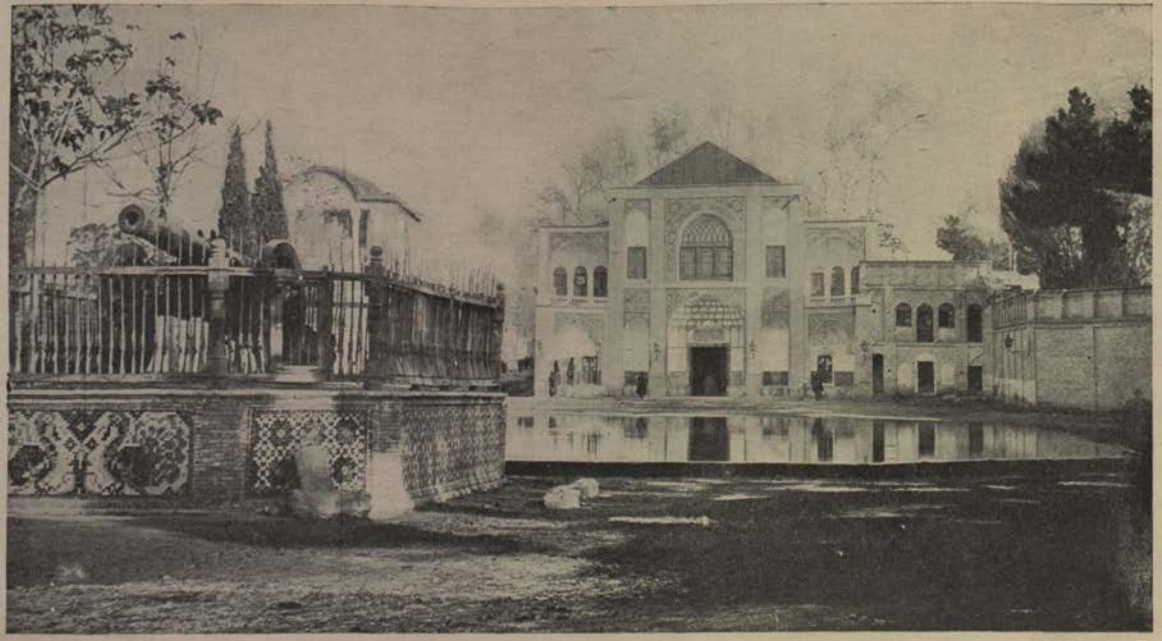
CHAPTER XII

EXPLORING TEHERAN

TEHERAN is a city, the interest of which grows upon one, — not through its mosques and monuments, but because it is Asiatic with much of the vileness of the Orient left out. The life in its streets is interesting; of sights in the ordinary definition of that word, there are but few, but where else in the Orient can one see so much of Court life? Certainly not in Constantinople or Cairo, and if you do, it is European; but this is unique, as is certainly this palace, with its strange jumble of objects, its courts and fountains, its throne and throngs of brilliant uniforms,—and the squalor and wretchedness of the people rolling up to its very portals.

There is much dirt and vileness, but it is *not* the vileness of Constantinople. The interest of Cairo centres around her mosques and tombs and her monuments,—the interest of Teheran is in her people, her Court, and the life thereof. Leaving our Legation on my first morning of exploration I passed down the Street of Ambassadors and under the flags of all the nations represented at this oldest Court of the world. Great Britain has the most pretentious structure. It is a quiet, stately building, and occupies

an immense compound beautifully laid off with trees and lakes,—under whose shade and by whose waters we enjoy many a cup of tea dispensed by beautiful Lady Harding. I have said that all the legations are in this street, but that of Russia is not; it is far off beyond the palace. Russia does not like neighbours even in the matter of legations, and in Teheran hers is in the heart of the old city, while all the others are in the new quarter added by the late Shah. The Street of the Ambassadors has its ending in the great square of the city, an immense plaza called the "Gun Square," because of some old cannon therein. The buildings roundabout are, for the most part, low, one-story structures, the finest being that of the Imperial Bank, which occupies the whole of the eastern side. In the centre is a huge tank of water guarded by a rusty iron fence and four old cannon, but the most distinctive structures are the four arched and quite stately gateways. The whole is dusty and crazy looking, in fact, thoroughly Oriental. Crossing it and passing a lot of old cannon at one end, strongly guarded by a picket fence, I pause a moment to gaze up at the national banner which, when the Shah is in Teheran, always waves over the gate in the south-west corner, which leads to the Avenue of Diamonds. To-day the standard is upside down, but in an Empire two thousand years of age that is a mere matter of detail. The Avenue of Diamonds is a dusty thoroughfare, with mud structures on either side. In its roadway, every here and there, are the square openings already mentioned, down which I look to swiftly running streams. These are the ancient



139 THE PEARL CANNON AND MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE PALACE, TEHERAN

waterways of Persia, and all through the land you will come across openings down to them, and they are often hundreds of feet below the surface of the desert. Here in this Avenue of Diamonds, they are but a few feet; the water seems swift enough in its course to cleanse the city, but it does not do it.

There is much misery in the Avenue of Diamonds, which the sale of a few of those precious stones might change to comfort—for a day at least, but these miserables would soon return to their natural and preferred state of squalor. Yonder poor little maiden is sightless, yet she knows that a "dog of a Christian" is passing and begs her best. This wretch at my right has had his hands hacked off at the wrists for some petty offence, and knows well that I will give just to get rid of the dreadful sight.

At last I reach and pass the portals of the palace by which we entered yesterday and go on to the cannon of pearls by the Drum tower. This cannon is "sanctuary" for Teheran's criminals, and so long as they can reach out to touch it they are safe from pursuit. To-day there are several gathered under its shadow. The favourite seat is the one from which they can reach out and dip their hands into the water of a great tank as it follows the orders of the Prophet and softly laps and flows over its flat marble rim. This is the very heart of Teheran—the heart of the Orient—where all memories of the Occident drop away from one as a mantle, or the shadows of night.

Even such modern life as Teheran possesses does not penetrate here. Pigeons flutter down from the plane trees and splash in the water; a camel passes

solemnly, a donkey bearing a grave-eyed, white-turbaned Moollah trots in and out, and a sad-faced woman pauses a while under the cannon, that its sacred shadow may fall over her and she be no longer barren.

It is said the cannon came from Delhi and wore pearls, hence its name. It is also said to have come from Shiraz, and again to have been taken at Ormuz, but all that matters not; it is sacred here, and here rests in an eternal calm, except daily at sunset when the silence is torn to fragments and thrown broadcast by the royal salute of great horns, kettle-drums, and fifes from the Drum gate adjacent. Of all nations on earth the Persians can make the most noise with their national music and salutes,—there is no endurance possible, you must clap your hands to your ears and flee away. These performers would be a joy to our boys on the Fourth of July at home.

To-day as we sit on the flat marble rim of the basin feeding the flocks of pigeons, the sun sends shafts of light through the arches of the gateway and into the dark portals of the palace, throwing the brilliant uniforms of the men on guard into bold relief; then mounting higher and higher, it passes from palace to distant mountains, where it gleams and gleams and then goes out suddenly; and as suddenly comes the awful clangour from the gate above and we flee away home to tea and pleasant chat on the wide veranda. To-day the Russian minister and Lady Harding are of the party, and the time goes swiftly until almost the dinner hour.

Teheran upon the Christian Sunday is as quiet as a country village at home; in fact, there is little

noise at any time in the European quarter, and the natives are too far off to disturb us.

All of our world is on the move towards the mission chapel, a small structure within an inclosure, containing several houses, all connected with the mission, which is a Presbyterian one. Most of the worshippers are English, in fact all, save those from our Legation, and the service is that of the English Church,—otherwise the place would be empty. The missionaries are rather wise in that respect. I believe that in summer the church in town is closed and services held out at the English settlement, some seven miles towards the mountains. In town there are several services for the natives, but none appeared at that this morning. By natives one means Nestorian Christians, for it would be death for a Persian to attend. Knowing such to be the case I could not but wonder whether we were justified in the expense — in time, money, and lives—of the missions here, and, having an old friend in charge, I put the question to him. His reply I venture to publish, trusting he will not be offended by my so doing. What he thinks of Teheran as a residence is graphically expressed in his last paragraph.

"TEHERAN, PERSIA, Dec. 15, 1903.

"DEAR MR. SHOEMAKER:

"In reply to yours of 10/23/03 permit me to say that we find our work amongst all whom we can reach with the Gospel message. The organized work in Urumia is chiefly among the Nestorians; in our other stations among the Armenians. The penalty for apostasy from Islam is death according

to the law, but the Persians are themselves heretics according to the Sunnees, and the progress of Babism and Bahâîism has to some extent opened the way for religious discussion with Moslems, and we are able to bring to the attention of some of the Mohammedans Christian truth.

"As to your next question, whether we consider Persia a 'good field' for our work, it depends upon what you mean by a 'good field.' It is certainly not an easy field, and it is not one that is likely to show much outward success, but if you are yourself a true disciple of the Master you will see that it is included in the great commission which our Lord gave his disciples when he left the world (Matt. xxviii., 19; Mark xvi., 15). It is therefore a good field, because commanded, but certainly a difficult field.

" I should think one trip to Persia for pleasure, would be sufficient.

" With best wishes, yours sincerely."





CHAPTER XIII

A ROYAL REVIEW

ALL our afternoon yesterday was passed on horseback among these yellow hills as they rise toward the greater mountains; and nestled some eight miles out we found the summer homes of those from Europe and America, whose lives are to be spent in this far-off land. The place is an English concession, belonging as much to that Empire as Trafalgar Square. Russia has a concession close by. Life here in summer is tolerable, while it is torture in Teheran.

We are to attend to-day a review of General Kossagoofsky's Cossacks. As the Shah is expected, most of the diplomats appear in full-dress uniform, but fortunately we of the lesser world are not compelled to don our evening clothes as for the presentations; nothing could be more uncomfortable than spending four or five hours in such costume amidst all the dust, heat, and glare of a Persian day.

The review is held at the Cossack barracks, an enormous square some eighteen hundred feet each way, with a fine pavilion and barracks on one side. This structure has several balconies, and on the one directly over the Shah all the Europeans are gathered

and perhaps expected to remain, but if so, I do not comply with the expectations. For an hour or more we wait, watching the gathering troops in the square below, while we greet and chat with the arriving diplomats, and endeavour to keep out of the sun, which even at this season is dangerous.



COSSACK GATEWAY

The plain of Persia stretches away to the south, unbroken for many miles, while Teheran is asleep, so far as the natives are concerned. In our land the roofs and walls would be crowded, but there is not a beggar's handful in sight here from all the population around about. Indeed, Teheran, built of mud and mud-coloured, save for the pavilions of the palace and a mosque or two, from where we see it

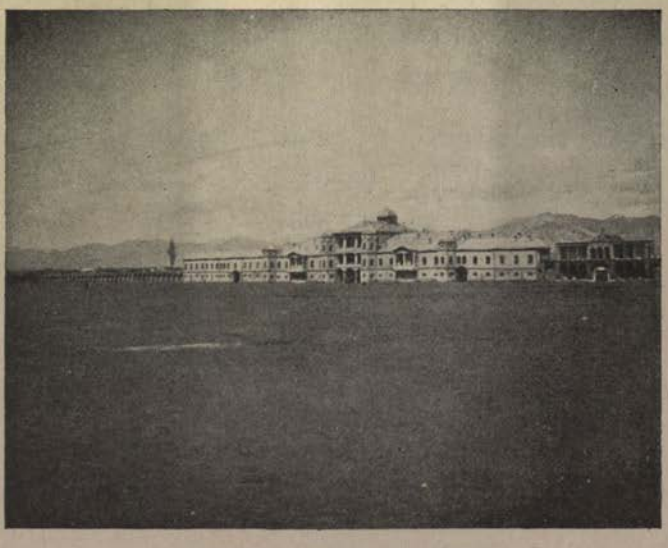
to-day presents a poor appearance, and seems of no extent; but enter her bazaars yonder, and you will be soon undeceived. There you may wander for hours in their shadows and, in fact, lose yourself completely.

Some of the Shah's household arrive from time to time. One carriage and four contains a solitary, lonely little prince, and, as he approaches the arch-way underneath, a squad of boys in bright scarlet uniforms and white astrakhan caps stand and salute. The tallest is not yet four feet in height, and the little one is too comical; all the weight of the Persian Empire with its Russian and English complications must rest upon that grave personage,—but the Prince has alighted amidst a solemn silence and as solemnly ascends the scarlet carpet to the royal balcony.

It 's too hot and uninteresting up here. So the "Enfant" and I descend, and *en route* are warned off the royal staircase, but pass down one equally as gorgeous as to carpets.

These barracks of the Cossacks are spacious and well built. In the central portion are suites of rooms for the officers, which to-day are at our disposition. Those for the Shah are on the first floor above the arch, and in the balcony is a raised platform (dais) covered by a very fine, *modern* rug; in fact, these Persians do not care for antiques in anything; they much prefer a modern article, and one soon ceases to be surprised at finding the royal staircase covered by common European carpets, or an advertisement of Pears' or Monkey brand soap framed and hanging upon the walls of the palace, as I actually saw the other day.

But a fanfare of trumpets hurries us on and out into the blinding, sunlit square, which by this time holds the Cossacks, some two thousand in number, all uniformed in black, no colour, from turban down, save the silver lion of Persia on the turban; the buckles and cartridge tops are also silver. Some of



COSSACK BARRACKS, TEHERAN

the cavalry wear scarlet with black turbans, and all the musicians are in white.

The chariot of the Shah has entered the far gate, and we can see that he has dismounted and will review on horseback. Then the chariot comes racing toward us, and behold! it is an auto car of the latest pattern. What would Darius the King say to that? It is in the form of a landau, and I

note, down between the cushions of the front seat, the handle of a revolver. Life is not all roses to His Majesty, and he dreads the fate of his father, which will probably be his own.

As the procession passes around the square there is intense silence from the Cossacks until their officers give the signal, and even then their cheers sound half-hearted. The Oriental is not so easily moved to such expressions of feeling. They will much more readily join in the howls of a mob, but is not that the case with all races?

General Kossagoofsky is so gorgeous to-day that he quite overshadows every one around him. As I stand in admiration as he approaches, I happen to glance at another face on his right, whose eyes are gazing straight into mine. A middle-aged, very weary face, and it is a second or so before I realise, with a start and salute, that I am face to face with Persia's monarch, who, I have no doubt, envies my freedom and ability to move when and where I please, without fear of consequences.

I shall never forget the dull, weary face of Muzaffer-ed-Din, as I saw it under the blazing sun to-day. It was but for a moment, and then he passed within the arch, but that glimpse told many things. His was not an heroic figure as he sat huddled up on the grey horse.

As for the review, these are the best troops of Persia; in fact, judging by those we saw at the palace last week, about all the troops her ruler possesses that amount to anything, and he can scarcely be said to "possess" these, as they are entirely under the dominance of General Kossagoofsky.

He has created them from the first enlistment, and at his bidding they would dethrone any Shah. In fact, from all I can learn, I should judge that this same General—a Russian—is the real ruler of Persia. Some years since, the prime minister fell from grace, which usually means death. In this case, through General Kossagoofsky's power and assistance, he was spirited away to some provincial town, and there secreted in a mosque to which his father had been generous. There he lived, though the Shah endeavoured to make away with him on every possible occasion; but Kossagoofsky was ever on the watch, and even advanced money to the extent of $20,000 for his friend's support. Finally the time came and the minister was reinstated, and, be it said to his credit, his first act—most un-Oriental—was to repay his friend in need. They are fast friends today. When the late Shah was assassinated, it was this same General who seated the present Shah upon the throne, and I fancy he keeps him there.

These manœuvres seem to me like all others in this land. There was some fine riding in the Cossack fashion, standing on the saddle, but nothing unusual aside from that. During the whole time the bands kept up a series of ear-splitting barbaric pieces, royal music, but, the instant they were over, changed to European airs, to which the man on the motor car kept time, showing that he was not a Persian, as they have no liking for nor can they understand the Western music.

The inhabitants of Teheran paid little attention to what was going on until the firing began, when instantly walls and roofs became black with people,

but silent always. After that ceased they melted away, and one wondered whether they had been there at all.

His Royal Highness, after an inspection of the barracks, departed in his motor car. I was examining it as he came out, and so had another good look at him. He wore the same uniform as at the salaam, bejewelled to a lesser degree, but the obliging sunlight forced the stones into more life than in the palace; in fact, as a general thing, these Eastern gems do not possess the life of those we see elsewhere. If these of the Shah be genuine, they must be of enormous value, but I noted with some of the larger ones that I could see quite through them to the gold lace beneath, and as for life, there was none until in the full blaze of the sun. Perhaps the tired, weary face above them deprives the stones of all desire to sparkle. To-day His Royal Highness climbed into his motor car and sat down all in a heap, noticing no one, in fact, he cowered down, and I understand that he is hourly in dread of death.

With all his supposed power he is moved entirely by those around him. If the commander of the Cossacks wants what the Shah does n't care to give, he simply intimates to his soldiers that a disturbance is in order, the news of which quickly penetrates to the ears of the shut-up monarch and has a prompt effect.

If the women of the Anderun (the Harem) do not receive their monthly allowances on time, a murmur begins which will quickly unseat the prime minister and cause a revolution. If the Moollahs (priests) are dissatisfied, there is a religious row, and to these and

many more the unhappy Shah must bend an attentive ear if he would retain life and throne. These Moollahs were set against this prospective visit of their ruler to Europe, and not until they had been well paid did their "divine inspirations" indicate that he might make the journey.

Yonder goes one of them now, fat and unctuous-looking. He straddles a sturdy white donkey. His pointed yellow slippers project from his white robe almost at right angles to the little body, while a white turban rises above his voluptuous face.

The Shah will start on the 6th of April. He will be a month in passing through his dominions. As he dreads the sea he will go by land to Tiflis, and a road is being prepared.

I think I have stated that the money for this trip comes from a loan from Russia, to which the people strongly object, well knowing that another tentacle from the great octopus of the North has been wound around their country; but that does not trouble the octopus or the Shah, who can live but once. He visited Russia on his last journey, and consequently she has intimated that she does not care to be bothered with him on this coming tour.

After the departure of the monarch, all the diplomats gather in one of the salons as General Kossagoofsky's guests and discuss each other and a very delicious "tea," together with all sorts and conditions of sweets in the shape of bonbons and cake, washed down by champagne. Very few Persians enter here, but as we leave, we examine the apartment lately occupied by the Shah, and there we find

them. I must confess that they seem surprised to see us and we do not remain long.

So the day ended, and we drove away between the high yellow walls which line the streets of Teheran.

Those of my readers who have visited Innspruck will appreciate the location of this city when I say that the one reminds me strongly of the other. There is the same stretch of mountains blocking the vista of the streets, and there is the same high wind casting stones and dust into one's eyes. Also the changes of weather are quite as violent. You may go out in a dead calm, but before an hour is past a violent storm of wind is roaring round you. But so far we have had no rain. The place must be a Gehenna in summer, when the heat is fearful and the dust a foot thick. Then the foreigners retire to their station in the hills, and Teheran returns for some months to her barbaric state.

Strangers are few and far between in this distant land. There have been but seven in two years that "one could invite to dine."



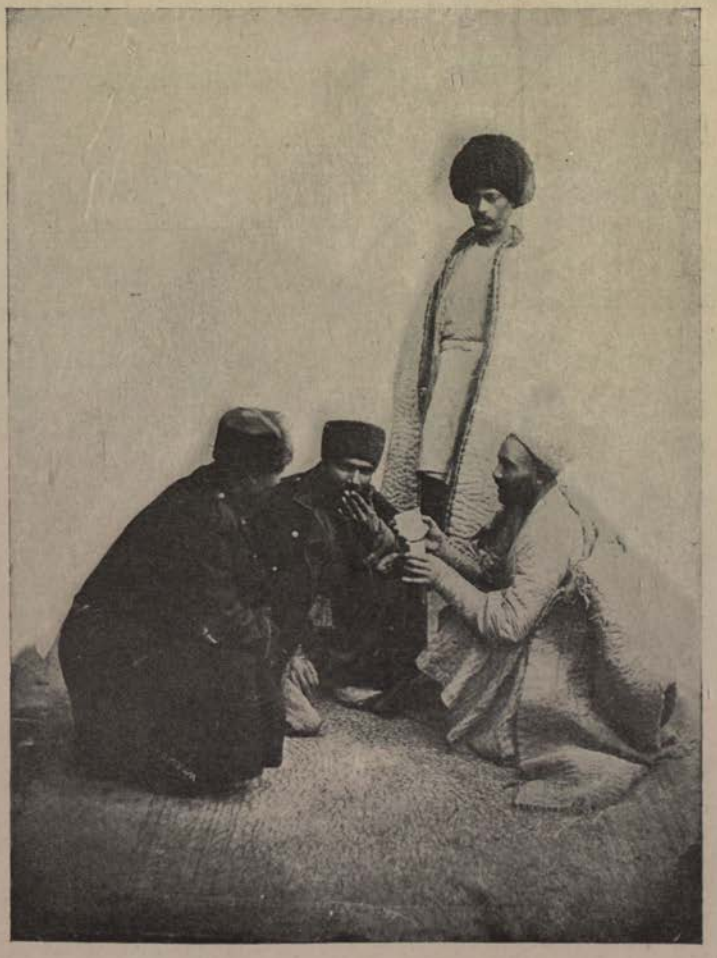
CHAPTER XIV

LIFE IN THE BAZAARS

WE have spent the entire morning in the bazaars, those great books of the East. To the man who can understand the language they are an inexhaustible source of interest. By their never-ceasing gossip all the news, secret and otherwise, is soon strewn broadcast. Their murmurs control the Court, from the Shah down, and are in turn controlled by the Moollahs alone.

In Teheran the bazaars are more picturesque than usual, somewhat as those of Constantinople were years ago, — vast networks of tangled passages, courts, mosques, and houses, where to be lost would prove easy, to be found, impossible if the people so willed it. They are arched in stone, and the only light comes through square openings in the roof, or latticed windows on some open square. In the distance one sees now a mosque, and beyond a caravansary, where stately camels and sedate donkeys meditate upon the passage of time, and the arrogance and vanity of man.

Here are stores of silver and brass, trays of turquoise and rubies, and an ancient rug. You will not notice them at first; in fact, the sedate Persian



PERSIANS

will produce them so quietly that you are not aware when he does it, and he has a most insinuating way of attracting your attention. While you are deeply engrossed in the inspection of his wares you will probably be knocked aside by a passing donkey, or a camel will breathe a bit of confidential gossip into your ear, something fresh from Ispahan, while he snuffs at your hair.

Eastern women, deeply veiled, will closely inspect you, even to handling your dress if you be a woman and making fun of you if you be a man.

Across the dim passage here sits a public letter-writer, grave as a judge, and fully impressing you with his exalted state consequent upon his superior knowledge.

A bright shaft of sunlight, in which the motes of dust float and sail, brings into bold relief a Persian boy of regular features, and delicately arched brows, almost forcing a belief that they are pencilled. His slender figure is clothed in a light blue tunic over a pale green under-dress. Beyond him in the shadows is a seller of nuts, dates, and figs, in sacks piled up around him. He sits Turkish fashion in the centre, with his scales and a long ladle close at hand. The passers-by stop and sample his many wares, while he calls attention to some delicacy, such as fresh pistache nuts or dried peas. One is apt to go away laden both outside and in, and is forced to push through the Oriental crowd which always surrounds a purchaser.

Going we pause a moment to gaze into the open court of a mosque. There is the inevitable fountain, with its squatting figures, its strutting pigeons, its

skeleton trees. We can see but little because of the screen, and more we may not see, for an infidel must not look upon, much less enter, a solitary mosque in Persia. It is the only country I have ever visited where this has been the case. Even in barbarous, barbaric Bokhara, we will enter her holy of holies, but here we may not even pause, and my camera causes lowering brows to gather around me. These fanatics do not like us, and their Moollahs keep alive the feeling.

Through the many mazes of the bazaars we are followed by a throng of people, and often have to order the servants from our Legation to clear a passage, a thing they accomplish by blows, shoves, and kicks, which the people do not seem to mind at all, though I confess I do not enjoy the sight. Save in an Oriental land it would mean our death at short notice and small shrift, — but to most Eastern races, toleration is wholly misunderstood. Especially is this so with the Filipino,—if you can conquer him you are the better man.

Back at the Legation again, with its peace and quiet and its letters and papers from home, and for the rest of the day and evening we are lost to the Orient, and once more live and breathe and have our being in lands across the seas.



CHAPTER XV

ANCIENT RAGES

IF you will turn to the fifth chapter of Tobit, there you will read of Rages and the story of Tobias and Sara — that maiden to whom six men were espoused, and all of whom were killed by the wicked spirit who loved her, and each and all were quietly buried in the early dawn by her father, that there might be no scandal connected with his house. But Tobias had been warned by an angel who accompanied him of this fiend, and, provided with a charm against him—smoke made by the ashes of perfume and the heart and liver of a fish—he routed the Prince of Darkness utterly, and Tobias and Sara slept the sleep of the just, much to the astonishment of her father, who had a grave prepared, such was his belief in the fiend.

In Judith, we are told of a great battle here in which Nebuchadnezzar defied and slew Arphaxad the King of Rages. The name meant not only the town but the province. Isadore called Rages the greatest city of Media. Alexander passed here in pursuit of Darius Codomannus, fleeing to the gates of the Caspian. Rages decayed after Alexander's death, but was once again restored. It was taken

by the Parthians and bore several names, but returned to its ancient one after all. Some years since, when its walls were in better state, they measured 4500 by 3500 yards. As with its successor, Teheran, Rages was the guardian of the Caspian for this section. Because of the great salt desert of Trau every army seeking passage from the east to Media or Mesopotamia must skirt the Elbruz mountains, which send out a long spur to the southward, very precipitous in character, far into the desert. To round this is most difficult, and the only pass—the "Pylæ Caspial" is here, hence the main importance of Rages. In Rages, also, was born Haroun-al-Raschid. Let us go to his birthplace, let us visit Rages.

We are *en route* by three o'clock for the only railway Persia boasts. It starts from the south side of the Teheran, and we are half an hour, driving rapidly, in reaching the station. This is a structure quite imposing in size, and possessing all that a railway station should possess,—the entrance hall, the ticket window with its rail to keep off the crowd, the man to punch the tickets, and then the waiting-room and long outside platforms.

As I stand on the latter, I see what are evidently engine-houses, car-sheds, and several tracks. All good enough for a beginning, you will say, but what next? A little train of two cars, one open, one semi-closed. Into the former we mount, and with a scream from a penny whistle, the guard opens the brake and away we go, engines being a mere matter of detail and evidently not required. We rattle off through the walls of the city and out over the yellow



161 THE ONLY RAILWAY IN PERSIA

country, with its red hills rising up to blue-grey mountains topped in snow.

Demavend is on view to-day and shows a perfect cone of white. The altitude of this, the great mountain of Persia, is given anywhere from seventeen thousand to twenty-two thousand feet. It is fourteen thousand feet above Teheran, which stands 3396 feet above the sea.

It is down grade all the way to Rages, though at times it would seem not enough so to carry us onward, but it does, and we rattle along to tooting horns and whistles, and even pass a "siding" where no train awaits us.

This only railway of the kingdom is but seven miles long, running past the side of the ancient city of Rages to the shrine of Abdul Azim, one of the most holy in Persia. In its mosque the late Shah was murdered, and there he is buried. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims go there each year. We see little of it.

A walk down the main street, surrounded and followed by the usual beggars, rather more repulsive than usual, a penetration a short distance into the bazaars and a glimpse of two golden domes, and that is all. We are stopped short by some rusty chains which bar out all infidels. It would be death for us to pass them, though the worst criminal or beggar in the land may do so at any moment.

There is nothing to do but to return the way we came. Ancient Rages is situated about a half-mile nearer Teheran, and we walk up the railway track in search of it.

If this be Rages the ancient, of which there

seems some doubt in the minds of the antiquarians, then it dates back to the time of the Aryans. In the days of Tobias it was a city of over a million inhabitants. Here came the troops of Darius and Alexander. In 250 B.C. it was the capital of Arsaces, the founder of the Parthian Empire. It possessed forty thousand dwellings and one thousand mosques, each of the latter holding a thousand lamps of gold and silver. At one period it is said to have held eight million souls within its walls, famed for their hospitalities and politeness. Where are they now?

The "yellow danger" was no mere name in those days, for to Rages in 1221 came Jenghis Khan, and in "one day his hordes slew seven hundred thousand people." The following century brought Timur, who completed the work of destruction. So passed the glory and might of Rages.

In 1404 the Spaniard, Di Clarijo found it a great city all in ruins. To-day we see two lonely towers and a ruined wall, and of things living, over all the yellow sands, nothing save a skulking jackal.

There was once a citadel on that rock yonder—it can still be traced, and all the vast space below and surrounding it was encircled by fortified walls, the entrance guarded by three great towers, and the whole forming a triangle. One of the great towers has been restored and stands some seventy feet in height, but the restoration has destroyed the charm. Beyond it one may visit a ruined tower, which, to my thinking, is much more interesting. To preserve what time and fortune have left of such places is well, but a restoration is a mistake.



165 MOSQUE OF SHAH ABDUL AZIM

The trade caravans and armies of the past have moved along this same highway almost since the world was.

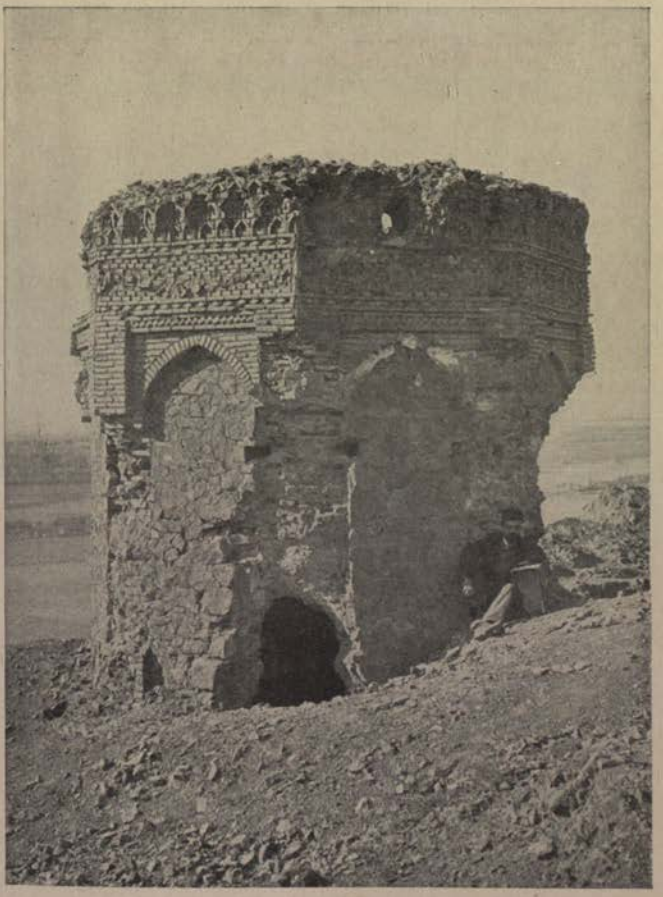
The greatness of Egypt began in the reign of Swefern, 4000 B.C., when he laid out the route to the copper mines of the valley of Moghara in the peninsula of Sinai. There exist to-day the wells built on the route from Ur to Sinai before Babylon came into existence. The career of Babylon opened with Saragon, B.C. 3800, and Bactra was hoary with age even then. To-day she is called Balkh, and lies to the south-eastward of Bokhara. She long held her place as the great point for the trade east, west, north, and south, and first amongst her highways was this one before us. Southward from here it passes over the Zargos Mountains to Babylon and is still the post-road from Bagdad to the Oxus. Another great route was the southern, along which Alexander marched on his return from India, passing through Persepolis and Susa. Not until the ancients learned the ways of the sea and lost their dread of it did the importance of these highways in a measure pass away.

Is Rages as old as Bactra, the "mother of cities"? Was she a necessary point upon the great highway built by Semiramis—this same highway winding off before us "to the eastward past that lonely Tower of Silence," gleaming so white in the moonlight? What was the first sign, centuries ago, of the approach from Bactra? What did the dwellers on this spot behold then? The first camel? And what thought they of the strange beast as it swung slowly into sight from out the shadows yonder? Were

there two, or many, and did they pause in their usual stately way and survey the city? Or did they come with the glittering hosts of Semiramis by the thousands and tens of thousands? Be that as it may, their kind alone survive. The city and the hosts are gone utterly, but down the ancient highway yonder from Bactra comes a stately procession of these ships of the desert to the sound of many soft-toned bells.

But to Rages they may not come, for here to-day there is absolutely nothing left save those towers and some fragments of crumbling walls climbing the hills. One cannot tell which was their outer face, though surely such a city must have been in the valley and not among the hills. As I wander around, leading my horse, I can turn up with my stick heaps of broken pottery and porcelain. No regular researches have ever been made, but I fancy these tiny bits are all that remain of the great city. Of what did they form a part? Did they decorate some homes? did a dainty maiden carry the water-jar, of which that green fragment is all that is left? Where is she now, then? where are the sepulchres of all those millions? Were they buried as are the Persians of to-day? If so, they have long since been blown across this desert in dust-clouds. When the disciples of Zoroaster ruled the land they were given to the birds of the air; but—they are so utterly *gone;* with all their teeming millions, their busy lives, their individualities, they are so utterly *gone.*

As one turns up these bits of pottery the sense of doom comes down so terribly that one shudderingly wonders wherefore are we born, and the question



RUINED TOWER, RAGES

must arise to the mind,—Is our far-western land to suffer a like fate? Has the wave of civilisation rolled round and round the earth for countless ages, bringing life and light in places for a season only, and then moving onward, leaving desolation, decay, and annihilation in its track until it comes again? How many times has this occurred already? None who have gazed upon the ruins of our own continent in Central America and elsewhere will dare to say that it has not once at least passed over our Western land, and if once, then why not again? That great red moon rising over the mountains could answer the question if she would. She has seen it all, and she must be very weary of the long procession.

I fancy ancient Rages was like that town of Teheran yonder, built of mud, and, like all other Eastern towns, nothing is ever repaired after it is completed; build a new one elsewhere, if you will, but never repair what has been completed.

As the traveller of to-day journeys over the plains of this land, his eye will be attracted by many imposing walled towns, towered and gated, and with many domes,—all presenting stately pictures and causing him to desire a closer inspection, as surely there must be somewhat of interest there,—but approach, and the whole is made of yellow mud, sun-dried. Enter the gateway and you will pass through endless streets between mud walls, no opening anywhere, no sign of life, save where there is a bazaar, or you find a café. Behind those walls you cannot see, nor may you enter or ask questions. The mosques are also closed to you; the people don't want you, and you feel that but for fear of the

powers that be—they in turn cowed by the outer world—they would express their dislike in strong terms and violent acts. You would be much safer in that lonely Tower of Silence up in the gorge of yonder mountains than in these towns of the living.

We return to Teheran on horseback and find the wild gallop over the desert a decided relief,—at least our day is not over and gone,—we are alive yet, thank God!

The sun has departed, but his last rays still linger on the great peak of Demavend, flaming up yonder like some lighthouse of the greater God, a beacon beckoning us ever forward, telling us to leave the grand, sad subject of the immortality to a higher power; to go forward, do our duty, fill our niche in the great structure of the world, leaving the rest to God.

Drink, for you know not whence you came, or why;
Drink, for you know not when you go, or where.



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CHAPTER XVI

THE PALACE OF THE SHAH AND THE PEACOCK THRONE

THESE Persians as a whole are a much more majestic race than the Turks. They are more like the Sarts of Central Asia. I have seen several very imposing men, all of whom would wear the robes and jewels of the Shah with a majesty he can never hope to attain; one especially impressed me as he moved along the dusty highway, clothed in rags, but full of dignity; tall, slender, graceful. His brown hair parting over a placid brow fell in long masses to his shoulders, delicate eyebrows arched above a long, slender nose and shaded eyes of brown most benign in expression, his curling beard gave evidence of perfect manhood. He wore a white garment reaching to his feet, over which was thrown a brown mantle. His robes were rags, but he wore them like a king. Slowly and majestically he passed me by, and I confess that I did not possess the assurance to photograph him, so greatly did he call to my mind our mental portraits of Christ the Lord.

We have been so fortunate as to obtain another entrance to the palace inclosure. Some religious

festival is on to-day, of which we have received notice, and noon finds us *en route*. Entering by the same gate as on the day of the Great Salaam, we find the court crowded with soldiers, and as we advance General Kossagoofsky comes to meet us, for Mrs. Griscome is of the party, and hence we are the recipients of much attention, and see many parts of the palace that would have remained closed to us. The review proves about the same as that on the New Year's day, the Shah sitting well back behind some curtains, while his troops defile before him; his officers stand in a square below the window, and his poet shouts some stanzas of praise and song into his indifferent ear. To-day we are out among the officers and enjoy it much more than being shut up in yonder room. The court is one of those great garden inclosures, so loved of the Oriental, with a vast basin of water in its centre. There are many trees and some beds of flaming tulips. There is some grass, the rarest thing to be found in Persia, and there are marble walks everywhere. Several bands discourse barbaric music,—that is the national anthem now rending the air. If it holds time or melody I cannot discover it. The opera-bouffe impression of the Great Salaam is renewed.

The ceremonies over, we start to inspect the palace, and are informed that it is locked up and the custodian away. General Kossagoofsky orders the keys to be found, and found they are and promptly.

Passing up an arched staircase, lined and ceiled in mirrors, and covered with rugs, we pause an instant to examine, through sealed glass doors, the library of the late Shah, a sizable room, lined with books to

its top. I am told that the collection is very valuable, but evidently books are not a weakness of the present occupant of the throne, for dust lies thickly within there.

The old hall of audience, now a museum, is just above the library, a vast apartment, arched and with many alcoves,—the latter lined with cases full of every conceivable object of value and of no value, interesting and ridiculous; but to me the only object to attract is the Peacock Throne at the far end. It stands in an alcove of glittering mirrors in fantastic shapes, facing the length of the room. Before the throne is an elegant carpet of gold embroidery, used to cover an elephant, sent long since from India as a present. But,—look at the throne of Persia, a structure shaped like a bed, some nine feet long and four wide. It is entered in front by a flight of three steps. Its legs resemble elephants' trunks. Its box-like body, steps, and legs are heavily lacquered in gold and incrusted in jewels. Upon a fine rug which covers its floor is a gold chair, and behind this rises a vast sunburst of diamonds, with a small jewelled bird on either side.

These birds—they are not peacocks—are heavily incrusted with gems of many colours, and the jewels in the sunburst are very fine. I fancy the throne was not intended to hold a chair,—they are a Western invention,—but rather a pile of cushions, upon which the occupant sat cross-legged, or kneeled —the Persians prefer the latter position.

There are or have been several Peacock Thrones in India, and according to Curzon there are two now in this palace in Teheran—one, a gorgeous

structure in a room by itself, was constructed at a cost of $500,000 for Fath Ali Shah when he married an Isfahani maiden who was called the Peacock Lady; the other, this in the Museum, really contains sections and all there was left of the great throne of the Moguls at Delhi. That throne was discovered in a broken condition by Agha Mohammed Shah, who by brutal torture forced his blind grandson, Shah Rukh at Meshed, to give it up, with much else of great value. It was then made up into this throne before us. I must confess that, though gorgeous, its gold looks like gilding, and its emeralds and rubies have no life. The whole is theatrical, and I think a thief in his search for plunder would pass it by.

The cases of this museum are laden with tons of all sorts of things of value and of no value, all tossed in together. Here is a drawer full of pearls in which you may thrust your arms to the elbow. The many crowns of the old dead Shahs are in cases near by and are near neighbours to all sorts of cheap, valueless articles.

The museum is crowned by a series of low domes decorated in blue, white, and gold plaster. The centre is tiled and contains a number of costly vases, candelabra, arm-chairs, cases of gold plate, etc. The vaults beneath this chamber hold untold millions of treasure, so one is told, a part of which might relieve some of the wretched people yonder; but suggest it to a Persian, and he would shrug his shoulders, replying: "To what end?—they would be as wretched again in an hour's time. It is their native condition—they like it and would not feel



PEACOCK THRONE, TEHERAN

comfortable in any other." Then he proceeds to tell you that the value of Persia's crown jewels is estimated at $250,000,000. The Shah had some $7,000,000 worth on his person at the Salaam yesterday. But to return to the museum. There is a very fine gold clock here, intended, it is said, for the Emperor of China by the late Queen of England, but which found its way here instead. It seems to please the childlike Persians immensely, and they have ruined its mechanism by forcing its performances with a crank. The peacock over its face waves its tail, and a pagoda rises from the centre in rapid time when two Persians get at the crank. But I fear we disappointed the custodians by our lack of interest in these European objects, which are the only ones upon which they place the least value.

The palace is a strange conglomeration of fine rooms, squalid courts, and dirty hallways. In one suite of apartments we find a superb set of furniture sent by the Sultan of Turkey. Life-size portraits in oil of Russia's rulers in gorgeous frames are on the walls. I note between that of Nicholas and Alexander II. a photograph of Queen Victoria which must have cost three shillings.

In the next room one finds some fine malachite vases and a clock of the same material, while on an adjoining shelf are two coffee-boilers and a set of fish-hooks in a case. The cheap things alone interest the Persians. What a strange people!

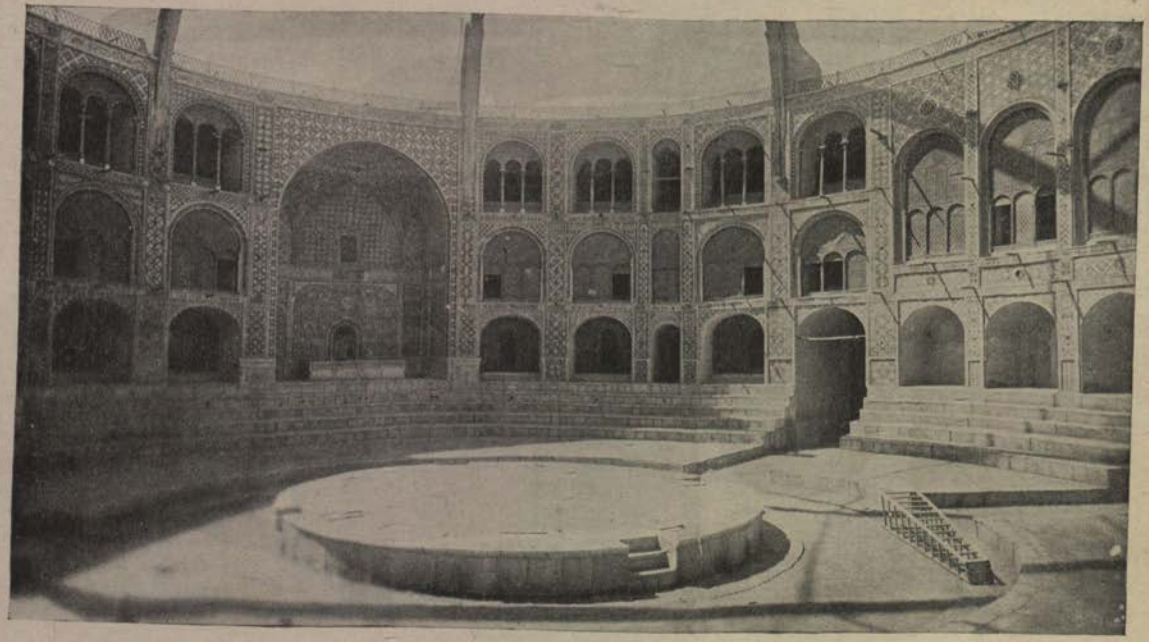
As I look through a window into the court I notice a bundle of switches and a bit of brown scantling,—the bastinado. The victim is placed on his back with his feet drawn in the air and whipped on

the soles of his feet and calves of his legs. The torture is awful. The Shah often looks on from his windows. However, I am told that torture does not prevail in Persia as it once did, but when I saw the other day, a poor wretch, guilty of theft only, hold up with piteous cry his arms from which his hands had been hacked off, I realised that it is not unknown, and God alone knows how horrible it may yet be within the secret labyrinths of this palace through which we are so carelessly wandering.

A low growl causes me to start, and turning I find a panther glaring and snarling at me through a grating — there are several others in the gloom behind him.

Passing onward we enter the royal theatre, a great amphitheatre in stone. Here is performed the Passion Play of Persia. On that high, pulpit-like flight of steps stands the Moollah, who interprets the play which takes place on the raised circular platform in the centre. The seats immediately around that are filled by the women, veiled, of course, and for the boxes higher up great sums are paid. If the performance lasts into the night, light is obtained by lustres of candles—thousands of them—fixed into the wall. In one of these arches the body of the late Shah reposed until it was, some months later, transferred to its final resting-place in the mosque of Rages.

As we pass outward we again traverse, to my thinking, the most interesting portions of this palace. The first court one usually enters is, as I have stated, vast in size, with the usual tank in its centre,



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AMPHITHEATRE, PALACE OF TEHERAN

and at one end, in an alcove, hidden by a white curtain, stands the ancient throne of Persia, a carved alabaster structure, in shape like the Peacock Throne, but no chair mars its effect. Around it hang the interesting portraits of a long line of Shahs, furnishing the best examples of Persian art. Place the Shah in his crown and robes, glittering with jewels, kneeling upon this throne, surround him by his men of state and princes of his house, fill this vast court with a bowing multitude, rend the air with barbaric music, and you have the Court of Persia. Such were the old Salaams, but until the fear of assassination passes away you will never see this sight in Persia.

I have seen this monarch outside but once,—at the Cossack review,— when he appeared anxious only to get away, which he did as fast as his motor carriage could take him.

With a sight of the great throne, which only General Kossagoofsky's influence obtains for us, the inspection of the palace is over, and expressing their thanks a very tired lot of people go home to luncheon.

The rest of the day passes in letter-writing until tea is served. To-day that is done on the colonnade in front of the Legation. Several drop in and we pass a pleasant hour, discussing each other and the news of the day, while around us the city seems to have gone to sleep, save for some weird chanting just outside our compound, or some barking dog.

The yellow hills close by rise to the bulwark of the snow-capped mountains, resting against the eternal skies. The hills are very near us on this side and send cool breaths of air downward in greeting to the

dusty city, while the shadows gather as the sun sets. The scene has not changed an atom throughout all the ages. Man has come and gone,—the works of God alone abide forever.





CHAPTER XVII

DEPARTURE FROM TEHERAN

THIS is my last morning in Teheran for all time to come, I fancy, as I certainly should never return, unless some friend was in the Legation; otherwise the life here would not be pleasant. The hotel is a wretched structure, where the traveller is anything but comfortable. Situated as we have been our sojourn has proven most delightful and profitable. The Legation is a pleasant, spacious structure, and we have been made exceedingly comfortable by our host and his charming wife, who are at all times most gracious to us, even when we threaten to "remain all summer." We arrived just at the right moment, saw the Shah and all the functions. Teheran was at its best, both native and foreign, and what there was to be seen we have seen under the most favourable conditions. It has been an episode in my life that I shall always remember with pleasure. But throwing aside all that, and coming here to the hotel, the traveller, especially if he knows other Oriental lands, is bound to be disappointed. If the Shah is here he will not catch a glimpse of him, nor can he enter the palace. Those two items removed, there is nothing to be seen in

Teheran. Her bazaars are up to the average, nothing more. You cannot enter, or even approach, a single mosque, though I fancy there is nothing to be seen if you could do so. To drive through the streets is simply to be inclosed for miles between high mud walls, with a glimpse now and then through some gateway showing a dusty garden—if it be native it will be wretchedly kept, and the foreigners are not able to accomplish much. As for trees, it is now the 1st of April and there is scarce a leaf to be seen or any signs thereof. Most of the trees stand ghostly and skeleton-like, forcing the belief, as next month will be full summer, that they never do turn green.

The surroundings of the city are not of great interest. If you journey southward your first stretch to Ispahan will be five days of dust and intense discomfort. That city is a repetition of this, with Shah and palace left out. Onward southward means eighteen days over the desert to Persepolis and Shiraz, and then ten days to Bushir on the Persian Gulf, over a very hard mountain trail. Persepolis is the only ruin of any consequence, a ruin very rich in detail, in inscriptions, and tablets, but in general effect in no way comparing to the other great ruins of the world. I should, of course, like to see it, but if I ever do I shall approach from the south and come in late November or December. You must remember that these ancient cities were built generally of mud or sun-dried bricks, hence their complete disappearance. The palaces and mosques in Northern Persia were constructed of the same material. Such was certainly the case at Rages, or there would

remain some traces of the buildings, but, as we have seen, aside from two towers, of brick both of them, there is nothing. The same holds in Turkestan.

If Bokhara and Samarkand were allowed to go to ruin they would disappear in short order, and in a century the traveller would be poking around amid heaps of dust for small fragments of tiling, as we did at Rages the other day. Persepolis would appear to be the farthest Eastern city where the influence of Egypt was felt and stone generally used in temples and palaces. We know such to have been the case with the great cities of Mesopotamia, Nineveh, and Babylon. Baalbec is of that material, and so, of course, are the temples of Egypt, but east of Persepolis, until India is reached, mud and sun-dried bricks are used at all times; so that man and the elements throughout long centuries have swept them from the earth.

At present the journey into Persia by the north is most uncomfortable and uncertain. In our own case it meant a blizzard of snow and wind,—a tempest which drove us back one hundred miles,—a difficult (and at times impossible) landing at Enzeli because of a shallow bar where many wrecks tell a sad story. From now until cold weather the north coast is the most fatal for fever known to travellers. Enzeli is bad, but Resht is a death-trap. The journey of two hundred and forty miles to Teheran is a hard one, though rendered easier now than of old by the post-road constructed by Russia, which nation has just obtained a concession for another road *via* Tabriz, so that in a few years you may enter Persia from

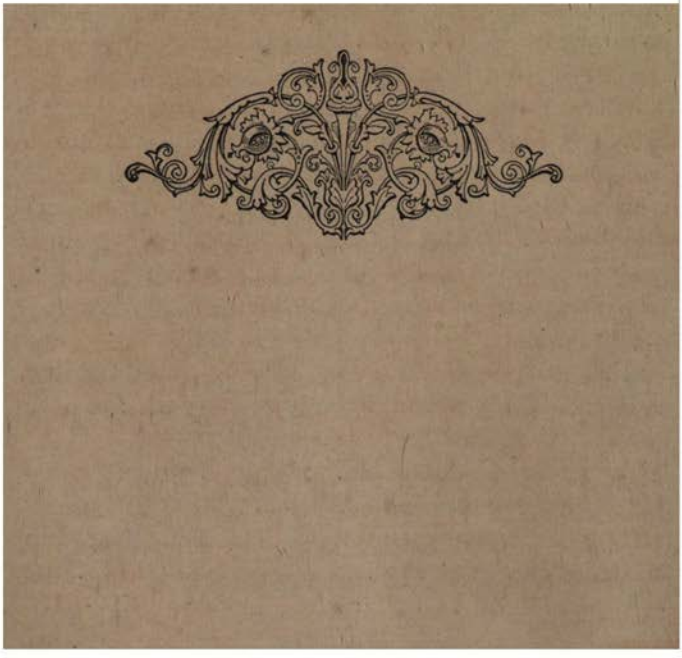
Georgia and avoid the sea. Then in a comfortable vehicle the drive would be rather enjoyable.

In the foregoing statements I have not exaggerated the state of affairs in the least. I might have made it all rose-coloured, but that would have been far from the truth.

The Shah moves on his journey to Europe next week, and during his progress no post-horses can be obtained. After he has passed, the whole system is so demoralised that it takes weeks to recover. Hence I am confronted with the alternatives, either to go at once or wait a month. The latter is impossible, and therefore some days before I had anticipated moving finds me *en route* to Enzeli. Partings are never agreeable, at least from those we like, and it is with a feeling deep blue in colour that I bid farewell to my host and hostess in this Eastern city, and enter again one of these rickety carriages—than which a better one can be found in any old junk-shop in Europe or America,—but it must be done, and so with a final hand-clasp I close the door behind me, and with a jangle of bells and rattle of waggon and carriage I am alone once more. The streets of Teheran look friendly and attractive as I drive through them for the last time, while the desert, as it swallows me into its limitless distances and increasing shadows, is more melancholy than usual.

As I lean from my rapidly moving carriage for a last glimpse of the capital, the Kasvin gate with its blue and yellow tiled towers and wings glows in the strong light of the afternoon sun. Through its

archway a long vista of dusty, glaring street is to be seen, and even as I look, two huge apes appear advancing solemnly, apparently the only living things in sight,—grotesque guardians of the blue-domed yellow city, that fades and fades as my distance increases, until finally a dust-cloud hides it from my view and Teheran is for me a thing of the past.





CHAPTER XVIII

THE LAND OF THE CAMEL

TRAVELLING is expensive over this road; the two hundred and forty miles cost for a carriage and baggage waggon, with four horses each, which are changed about every three hours, $110, with $15 road tax; to this is added forty cents to the two drivers every time we change horses. As I have already stated, the carriages could not be worse, while the baggage waggons are fairly good.

This old trap must, in its prime, have belonged to some lady of the Anderun. Yellow brocade still lines its top and clings to its sides, while the seat is Russia leather. Where the glass once was are now the tops of boxes; handles have long since vanished from the doors, but the springs are certainly superb or they would long since have collapsed.

Nineteen hours brings us to Kasvin, where I secure a somewhat better vehicle, at least I hope it will hold together for the journey.

To appreciate the blessing of being born an Anglo-Saxon, for to my thinking they are the most cleanly race on earth, one should come to the Far East, and to such a city as Kasvin. How her people continue

to exist down in all this filth passes one's comprehension. As I drive through the streets my carriage wheels sink almost hub-deep in the vilest of filth, and the passage becomes more than doubtful. Will the crazy vehicle hold together? and if it does not where will I be deposited? The smells are awful, and yet these people sit all around as though the perfumes of Arabia filled the air, but their stolid faces bear no friendship to the passing infidels.

A final lurch and lunge and we are out through the gate towards Resht and rattling along over a hard road. Progress is rapid for the first post, and then we encounter a delay. "No horses for an hour." Thankful that it is no worse, I settle myself to write these notes, while Casimir goes off to steal a chicken. Judging by the cackle going on I fancy he is successful.

The ride to-day should not be a very tiring one, as there is no dust, and the sun is not very strong. Yet when I reach a post at 9 P.M. I am too weary to go on, probably the result of constant watching as we whirl along the mountain road, dangerous in most of the places if one's driver is not very sure of hand and very sober, two conditions often lacking in this section. In fact, there have been several cases of severe injuries to travellers and total destruction of luggage from such causes.

Casimir has to shake me well when we finally stop. Indeed, I am very weary,—two days and a night with no rest for an instant. After my bed is stretched in the one room possible to enter in the post-house I roll in, thinking nothing of dinner and knowing nothing until five the next morning, when

an energetic cock just outside reminds me that it would be well to get *en route* once more. It is always wise to keep your servants near you in places like this, and Casimir by my orders is in my room and snoring most energetically. So sound is his slumber that I am forced to call him several times before he moves.

A breakfast of hard-boiled eggs, tea, and bread and butter satisfies the inner man, and we are soon in motion on our last day's journey to the coast.

Just as my horses are being put to, several other carriages drive up, but, thank the gods, "Pods" do not exist here and they cannot delay me by the presentation of one, so, being first, I drive off, leaving the late comers to wait if there be no horses. Remember always one thing in these post countries: if you desire to start at a certain hour, order your horses for two hours earlier. If you say "seven" and trust to these people it means to them awakening at seven, many stretches, and much talk. Then the horses must be fed—another hour for that, so that with all two hours are always consumed if not more. To-day it is but two hours, and it really takes Casimir more time to do up his saddle-bags than all the others to perform their parts. At last we are off, rattling down and through the yellow-red gorges.

I do not have the road to myself by any means; camels are ever present, and with them many donkeys and men. There is great similarity between the camels and Persians as to the manner of eating their food. Both squat on the ground and shovel it in. In a huge camp just passed men and beasts

were all at dinner, each of his kind, in circles, the beasts squatting around a heap of fodder, while the men surrounded a huge bowl, of meat and rice I fancy. There were a lot of those stately, gorgeously caparisoned camels off in a place by themselves, showing that there are social circles amongst camels as well as amongst men. Certainly those aristocratic beasts never seem to associate with the common drove. As those ships of the desert squat yonder all their dignity is gone, and they look like a circle of huge goslings. I really believe, from the gabbling going on, that they are inveterate gossips. At present they are certainly discussing that sick one over yonder, and have strong suspicions as to the cause of her illness.

Persia, save on the northern slope of the Elbruz Mountains, is treeless. Except in the gardens of Teheran verdure is not to be found until you cross the mountain ridges to the north. I have travelled from Monday noon until Tuesday night with no sign of green anywhere, yet, if ever present, it should be here now, as this is the second month of spring,—but nothing save the desolate red, yellow, and brown of plains and mountains greets the tired eyes. Even the olive trees are absent until the ridge is crossed, when they promptly appear, and then every mountain ridge is green with forests, the plains with grass, while flowers and trailing vines cover the great timber.

Just now there is a rainbow dipping off towards the distant sea, sparkling with a coolness,—oh, so delicious, after the blinding south!

All down the mountains our passage becomes one

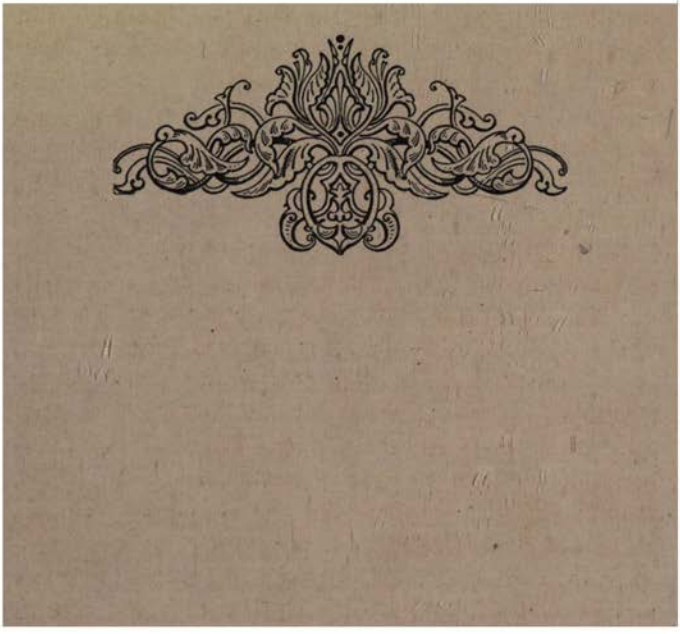
long flight, and again I wonder why this concern does not shatter to pieces, but we are finally down and out on our last post to Resht—a safe place now, but from May to October full of fever fatal to Europeans, but, for that matter, all who come to Persia are apt to contract fever. Teheran surely should be free from it, as that city stands very high, has no marshes within a hundred miles, and is for ever wind-swept and sun-cooked, yet every one who abides there any length of time is sure to come down with at least a slight attack, even in winter. Those who live there say that nervous troubles and great insomnia are very common, and when the cholera comes from Mecca or Benares the havoc is awful to contemplate. Never drink from Persia's running brooks or you will surely come down with fever. Man does his best to pollute them.

Our final stage into Resht should prove an easy one. The post-boys struggle for the privilege of driving us, as Resht is gay for them, and so I rattle off on my last drive in Persia amidst much laughter and shouting. It will take five hours for this stage. Night comes down and sleep with it, sleep not destined to last the stage, as I am awakened about seven by angry shouts, and find us all tangled up in a vast caravan of camels. These caravans move at night, not only because it is cooler, but to save the beasts from rheumatism, their great enemy. There is no use in trying to break through a mass of four or five hundred animals, so I sink again into the land of dreams, as these stately, solemn ships of the desert drift noiselessly and shadow-like past my carriage

window, their clanking, solemn bells the only sound upon the silence of the night, save the soft pad-pad of the many feet. Back to my memory comes the childish story of counting sheep as they pass over the stile, and I find I am counting camels in far-off Persia, until I drift off into dreamland, to the klank, klank, klank of the passing caravan. It is some time before we are able to move on and finally approach the gate of Resht.

Because the Shah goes this way shortly the streets are being patched in anticipation of the royal event. By "being repaired" in Persia means filling up the worst holes with a total disregard for all the others. We find several streets barricaded, but the drivers, with much noise, which almost seems riotous, proceed to remove the obstructions and drive onward, leaving some one else to replace them. Apparently there is nothing being done, as there is no stoppage, and we shortly draw up in front of Resht's only hotel. It is to be expected that post-houses kept by natives should be dirty, but here is a hotel whose proprietor hails from Paris, and claims to have been the chef of the Café de Paris. For dirt and vileness it has not its equal even among the Persian Sarais and "Posts" of Turkestan. It is so dreadful that one can do nothing save laugh, laugh, and go to bed, in one's own bed, mind you. At least they will give you hot water, and with a basin or two of it the dust of these past three days is transferred over the balcony into the street below. If it strikes any one, that is their own lookout. It is at least cleaner than the water they drink, and outwardly applied will not injure their health.

Sound sleep is to be had for the taking after such a journey, and I demand twelve hours of that life-giving sedative,—the only sedative known with no bad after-effects.





CHAPTER XIX

LIFE IN PERSIA

THE distance to Pera Bazaar is but five miles from Resht, and after being properly robbed by the French hotel-keeper, we start out. On the whole, I am rather lucky,—my baggage waggon, lightly loaded, only breaks down three times. I note that there are only three pieces of brass knocked off my trunks. The driver of the van sits on the lunch-bags all the way down, which accounts for my lunch being transformed into sandwiches. I also discover that the hotel man in Resht has stolen my pillow, but what matter?

Fortunately we are quickly through that horror, Pera Bazaar, but the time is quite long enough to allow several fights and a wild war of words, all between Casimir and these people. I rather enjoy these fracases, and upon the whole, as with the gondoliers of Venice, there is not much bad feeling, the noise and tumult to the contrary notwithstanding. However, the transformation from that pandemonium to the silence of the lagoon is most acceptable. Rapidly my boat passes out and away towards the only port of North Persia, and to the melancholy song of the boatmen glides down long

lanes of yellow water with high banks of green, spotted with buttercups. Overhead the sky is blue, while a balmy air cools one's forehead. Surely only man is vile. God Almighty meant this world to have been a thing of beauty, and so it is when one passes outward into the solitude of nature. What a relief this gliding craft after the jolting of the past journey! how soothing the gurgling of the waters and the boatmen's songs! There is no sound or motion. Presently the high banks disappear, and we pass outward into the marshes of the sea; tall pampas grass waves everywhere, and seagulls float overhead, while the air blows fresh from the Caspian. Our trackers come on board, and taking up the oars, send us onward merrily. These are craft of the most primitive description, high at the front, higher at the stern,—built of wood, with canes on the bottom to keep us from the wet, with a ragged, square-topped sail overhead when necessary, and with straight oars some eight feet long, having an ace of spades at both ends.

The narrow waterway runs into a great lagoon, where we find a paddle-wheel steamboat waiting, and are once more under the Russian flag when an element of certainty enters into one's calculations, utterly unknown while under the lion banner of Persia.

We do not get off without another squabble, —this time about our boat from Pera Bazaar. Of course the bargain was struck on taking it, but that makes no difference to the Persian mind. They are villains in all things if so allowed, yet one cannot but feel sorry for them. From the Shah down there

is but one end in view,—to bleed those below, to squeeze the very life-blood wherever possible.

Leaving Casimir to settle, I mount the companion-way to where the captain of the little boat waves me with much dignity into the only cabin the craft can boast, and asks if I will have tea. "Yes, certainly, and many thanks." Casimir is ordered to open his "grand battery *de cuisine*," now sadly reduced as to contents, and to produce one of the jars of preserves. He finds that Persia's roads have been too much for his things—a jar has broken, and his dismay is intense. I can imagine the state of affairs and do not add to his mortification by a personal inspection.

We are soon off down the lagoon. This trip is a rapid one, and I am shortly installed in another dirty hotel, here to abide until some ship comes in from sea, perhaps to-morrow or next day, certainly by Sunday, Neptune permitting.

Social life is somewhat mixed in Persia, even amongst the foreigners. Casimir has just had me to one side to say that the landlady of this house is a wife of the hotel man in Resht—whether or no a formality of divorce has been gone through with he knows not, and does not seem to weigh the question as one of importance. We saw another wife in Resht.

This is the only hotel in Enzeli, and, having the open sea on one side, cannot be very unhealthy, especially as it is out of the town proper, and separated therefrom by the garden of the Shah's palace, the latter a rambling new wooden structure. The gardens are full of orange trees and flowers, and from their midst rises a tall pagoda wrecked by some

storm rattling in from over the Caspian. The whole place from here might be a bit of Florida around old Fort George.

I should like to take a photo, but the day is hazy, and I will wait until the earth has turned herself around once more in her long, long flirtation with the sun.

It is dull waiting in Enzeli, and though I constantly scan the expanses of the Caspian, no trail of smoke is visible. However, it is but a day longer before the post comes, provided the storm-king does not drive her off. It would be anything but pleasant to be tied up here another week. The rain comes down in torrents and the wind howls dismally all day, while the sea beats a steady monotone, growing louder and more angry as the hours pass.

Sorrow and trouble have not forgotten to visit even this remote corner of the world. The landlady of the hotel has spent all the past two hours telling me of her trouble,—the old, old story. A waif of a girl taken in and cared for, with the usual ingratitude; a faithless husband and a broken heart. Now she, a faithful wife for fifteen years, is alone, deserted, and trying hard to make a living in this poor place. God help her! The man, as I have said, is that wretched, dirty hotel-keeper in Resht. The wife can obtain no redress, as, of course, the Persians only laugh at her,—this is not a land of law, certainly not for the weaker sex. As I listen to her, the winds moan louder and stronger.

I am fortunate, at least, in being under shelter and not out on the mountains in those wretched carriages. I know several who are out there,—one



PERSIAN WOMAN

lady, who certainly must be uncomfortable. The storm continues all day, and is still sobbing round the house when I put out my lamp at eleven o'clock.

What a difference the sunlight makes! The whole world is aglow this morning. The orange trees glisten in answer to its call, the sea murmurs in sweet content, and is as blue as turquoise; the thatched roofs have a picturesque beauty, while off to the southward, the great bulwark of the mountains, deeply snow-capped this morning, rises against a cloudless sky.

The Caspian is so shallow that the waves soon quiet down after a storm, and this morning one would imagine they had never known what disquiet and unrest were. The world of God is beautiful, and for a time let us forget that the nastiness of man underlies all this glittering panorama. Travellers who are forced, as I have been, to spend a few days on this coast should certainly come here to Enzeli and not stop in Resht. There can be no comparison between them as healthy abiding-places. I fancy from May to October both towns are fever-smitten, but in far different degree. Resht, surrounded by its miles of slimy marshes, and vile in itself, has "death" written over it in gigantic letters, but Enzeli is far out at sea,—on one side the open Caspian, on the other, great, swiftly flowing lagoons.

This hotel, though poor from most western standpoints, is immeasurably superior to the one in Resht, not only in its open location right on the sea, and the Shah's orange groves, but in its cleanliness and cuisine. It is presided over by a woman who works

hard and does her best. Poor creature! she evidently cared for that brute of a husband and is broken-hearted and desolate now. Had children been vouchsafed her it might have been better, but she is utterly alone. One's feelings must go out to her in infinite pity.

I have packed my camp-bed and bedding in the depleted "battery *de cuisine*" and sent it to Griscome in Teheran. Those things are valuable there, and it would not pay to carry it off with me.

As for the "battery *de cuisine*," it was a foolish purchase,—at least to have made it in Tiflis was a foolish act. I told Casimir to get what was absolutely necessary, and he got everything he could think of from a samovar down, spending some fifty dollars thereon. When I saw the huge hamper it was too late to do anything. If a journey into Persia had been decided upon, everything necessary could have been bought in Teheran. Casimir, having been there, should have known that. I have given the things away. Mrs. Griscome got most of them, this landlady the rest. I fancy some are locked up in Casimir's trunk, and, as I have said, my bed, etc., have just gone off in the empty hamper.

The transaction proves the truth of the saying that you cannot trust the best of these guides to exercise an atom of common-sense. It has been Casimir's delight to open that hamper, put on his cooking apron and cap, and, seizing a huge fork, strike an attitude, all the while telling me to "rest tranquil" that he "knew his business." Yet when it came to keeping out what was necessary for our luncheon, he always forgot to do so, and we would

not take the time from our progress to have it done at the noon hour.

Casimir is strongly like the picture of Sancho Panza. He inflicted the story of his past glories and greatness upon me, until I rebelled, and now he gets them off on the landlady. I have not the heart to refuse him his half-bottle of wine for dinner, as he is so intensely happy after having consumed it.

My attention was drawn from my book last night by the sound of a ridiculous wheezy old voice singing in the dining-room. On looking through a rift in the curtain, which, by the way, is composed mostly of rifts, I saw Casimir performing in a happy state for Madame and her friends. His cracked old voice rose and wheezed along in a most ridiculous fashion, while his attitude would have made a mummy laugh. But he was not meaning to be funny,— no, not in the very least. Like most amateur performances, it was too long, and I had finally to order him to bed, to his own indignation, and, I fancy, the great relief of Madame. However, he is kind-hearted and good-natured, which is everything in a guide, and when I compare his ever-smiling face with the sullen visages of many I have known, I am content and I sleep in peace.

These Persians are very religious. I have never been in a Mohammedan country where there are so many religious celebrations. In my walk I stumbled just now upon a quite unique scene. There is a bazaar here built as an open square, with a large tank of water in the centre, the booths being in the surrounding arcade. Noting a concourse therein, I

entered, to find the whole place crowded. Business was suspended, and in the little squares in front of each booth the merchants were smoking and drinking tea. One-half the court was filled with men, the other half with women, the latter shrouded in blue dominos and white yashmaks with perforated pieces over the eyes. All the people squatted on the ground. At the end on a raised chair sat the Moollah, robed in pale green with a brown turban. He appeared to be speaking to the people, but in a monotonous, conversational, and most disjointed fashion. During the few moments I stood amongst them, his audience disregarded him, turning their entire consideration upon me, especially the women. The sensation produced by the steady scrutiny of these black, unfathomable Oriental eyes is uncanny, to say the least, and I move off to be rid of it. It recalls to mind the bloody pages of the *Arabian Nights*, and I feel to see if my head is still on my shoulders.

Still, though the Persians are probably the most fanatic of the Mohammedans, these people to-day did not seem to resent my presence. In one of their approaching feasts they will slash and cut their own heads and necks in a frightful manner, and undoubtedly would be happy to do the same for any dog of a Christian. However, I do not crave this favour.

This day has been glorious. I know of few more beautiful ranges of mountains than the spreading Elbruz near Enzeli, though Demavend, the great peak, is not visible.



CHAPTER XX

BAKU AND THE RUSSIANS

BRILLIANT sunshine, placid water, and the Post-boat at anchor, are the pleasant signs of this morning. Not trusting that sea, I make haste to get on board my ship and am erelong ensconced thereon.

Shortly after starting I am again experiencing an example of the necessity of eternal watchfulness over one's courier. Casimir is for ever proclaiming that he is "a courier," and insists, not to me, of course, but to every one else, that he be treated with the dignity and consideration belonging to his station.

Yet when my passports turn up on this ship it is discovered that he has forgotten to have them viséd at Enzeli. At the portal of Russia I am allowed to pass, but whether I shall be turned back at Baku remains to be seen. It would be horrible to have that happen, and all owing to Casimir's carelessness. I gave him my passport when he went for the tickets, and he simply forgot the whole matter. I have just had a word or two with him on the subject, but his equanimity was not disturbed for an instant. He quietly informs me that there will be no trouble at

Baku, that he will "bribe the officer with four roubles," about two dollars (he appears to know the *exact* amount necessary). If all goes well, it will undoubtedly be owing to the universal friendliness of the Russians for Americans, though I do not doubt the efficacy of Casimir's method.

On leaving New York my document was viséd by the Russian consul there, and his endorsement carries the bearer therof into any section of Russia, aside from the military districts,—without question. None other is necessary. Hence, if I had considered the question at Enzeli, I should have thought that this rule held, but the officers inform me that having *once* entered the Empire I have exhausted that visé, and must have it attended to at every move. I have always done so when alone, but in this case left it to a courier who is receiving large wages for doing about nothing, save to tell me constantly to "rest tranquil."

Enzeli presents a picturesque and attractive picture as we sail outward. The grand mountains are all on review, and the waters dance merrily, but it was with a sigh of satisfaction that I boarded this little ship and realised that I was again under the dominion of Russia.

The Caspian is gently disposed to-day, and we drift over summer seas,—have breakfast and dinner out on deck and, though the ship is crowded, have rather a pleasant time. There are some English, but, aside from myself, all the other first-class are Russians. The clatter and harshness of that tongue rolls around constantly.

We stop at Astara and Linkoran, and at both

ports more Russians come out, generally customs officials and their wives, and the ship is detained an hour while they are given a meal, with much clinking of glasses and running around the table.

A sort of preparatory feast before the main meal is always furnished on the buffet. It consists of various things, such as bread and butter and cheese, stewed kidneys and fish, sausage and Vodka. One helps one's self and stands around anywhere while eating.

So far as table manners are concerned, the ordinary Russian is somewhat better than the German. His treatment of women is better, I think. If you were to venture a semi-reposing position on a salon divan in a woman's presence, you would be promptly told that such was not done in Russia.

The Russians play cards all day and night, chalking the score on the table-cloth. These were playing when I came on board and will continue until the ship reaches Baku.

We have on board one of Kossagoofsky's Cossacks *en route* home with his family. When he got ready to start from Teheran, he desired a certain carriage which had been engaged by an Englishman, who refused to surrender it. The General promptly sent down thirty Cossacks and took it by force.

Baku, viewed from a Tiflis approach and from one from Persia, assumes a very different aspect. In the first case she seems a rather poor and most unattractive second-rate town, but in the second instance she is a veritable metropolis,—bright, busy, and full of life. As you near her from the sea she spreads over some miles of sloping yellow shore with

a bright new green-and-gold-domed church rising from the centre, while to the north and closely adjacent lies Black Town with its ever-lowering clouds of smoke and smell of petroleum. The most prominent object to the traveller as he comes in from the Caspian is the Persian tower, tall and stately, close by the harbour. It is now used as a lighthouse, but tradition, of course, has provided a romance for its forgotten years. In this case it was a beautiful girl in terror of her own father, as was Beatrice Cenci. In order to gain time and so save herself, if possible, she induced the inhuman wretch to build this tower, promising to listen to his horrid suit when it was finished. When the day arrived she fled to its top and on his approach threw herself from the lofty summit, some one hundred and fifty feet above the water.

This old tower stands back from the water now, but I fancy its foundations in ancient days were beaten by the waves of the Caspian. It is circular in form, with a projection towards the sea like a handle. Built of stone, every alternate layer projects, producing a very uneven appearance. Evidently it was a fortification of some sort at one period of its existence, as there are chambers around its base, but I fancy it has returned to its ancient purpose, being now used as a lighthouse.

To be seized upon by an hotel porter, to be hustled into a decent cab, to be rushed over paved streets and through the life and bustle of a live city, all are strange sensations to the traveller just returned from the silence and sloth of Persia—it rather startles one at first. Here in the Russian town are

shops of all sorts and all full of people, but it cannot but strike a foreigner as very odd that the book-stores in this city of 151,000 people do not appear to possess even Russian maps of the Empire. I have been to four, but such a guide as Bradshaw's or a simple map was scarcely to be had.

I found two very elaborate ones, but only one small one, and that relating more to Siberia than Russia.

The Russians have either never discovered the art of paving, or it is a lost art to-day. From St. Petersburg down all the cities and towns show the crudest attempts in this respect. A Russian idea of a pavement apparently is sharp stones set almost on edge. A cobblestone pave is a joy to them. One can imagine the result in a short time to these light carriages. As driving is always done at the utmost speed of the horses, the noise is deafening, and one's nerves are strained to the utmost. One must hold on with both hands, or out one goes at every turn.

All night long the racket continues. Three times last night I was awakened by such a deluge of din that I sprang to the window to know what was the matter. Nothing—nothing at all save a little empty carriage and two small horses going like mad after nothing at all. So if you have nervous prostration don't come to Russia.

I must compliment Baku upon her improvement. They say times are not good here, but the place does not show it. On every side the tide of life seems flowing to the full. New blocks of stone buildings are going up in all directions—attractive shops line

the streets. The harbour is full of shipping, and evidently there is cargo for them all. The hotel is most excellent—clean rooms, well furnished, and excellent cuisine. When compared to the wretched place I found it in 1894 enough praise cannot be given to the proprietor for the change. Everything is to be commended save the sanitary arrangements—strange that such should be the case, but it certainly is so, and the less said about it the better. In 1894 the gutters of Baku's streets were soaked with oil. Horses and dogs were a sight to behold; everything smelled of it, and the whole was horrid and to be quitted as soon as possible. All that has passed away. The place is clean, and one would not know that Black Town, where that state of affairs still exists, is but a mile or two away. It is there, however, as the pall of smoke testifies, but its dirt and filth have been driven from Baku proper.

Baku is very much more in the world and of the world in 1902 than it was in 1894. It was sleepy and quiet then, remote from and forgotten by mankind—a place where one might live unknown and unnoticed, save by the eye of the law. I remember meeting here then an American, who, for some reason sufficient unto himself, had made the place his home for years, so that his native land had become but the shadow of a dream to him. In course of conversation I mentioned the name of James G. Blaine, when he said, "Blaine, Blaine; there was a man named Blaine. I remember now." Shade of the "Plumed Knight," wherever you be, what have you to say to that? And will you tell us what is fame?

I was decidedly uneasy as to our being allowed to land from Persia, in consequence of the lack of those visés, but Casimir has proven as good as his word. On landing I promptly handed the keys of my luggage over to him and, leaving everything in his charge, came on to the hotel, thinking that, once in the town, they would be less inclined to send me back. Still I waited with much uneasiness, but in a short time Casimir appeared, passports, trunks, and all. Judging from his description of what occurred, as well as by the conceited smile on his ridiculous old face, he must have completely annihilated the entire customs service. Certainly my passport bears the Enzeli stamp in full as though done in that town, and is now safely stowed away in my pocket.

Casimir takes upon his shoulders the troubles of every one. He has been out all day helping an Englishman and his family, whose passports had been lost by the steamship people, and eventually sent the crowd on their way rejoicing, while he brought a note from the Englishman to me expressing the hope that I had not been incommoded by Casimir's absence, and also his own appreciation for what had been done for him.

No gentleman in Russia may carry a package, be it ever so small, but I confess I felt rather absurd returning to this hotel just now with Casimir ten feet behind me carrying with great solemnity a tooth-brush. It is interesting to walk these streets, and much more agreeable than to drive, as impalement does not seem to have been done away with in Russia; at least a passenger in these droshkys feels

in imminent danger thereof from the pole of every other vehicle he encounters.

The traveller of to-day misses the stately portraits of the late Emperor, a magnificent man to look upon. The present Czar seems overpowered by his clothes, his head very small for his body when the latter is encased in uniform.

In this section of Russia there are but few soldiers, the army being massed in Central Asia, at Tiflis, Batoum, Southern Russia, and Manchuria. This part of the Empire is too secure to require their presence.

En route to the station to see a friend off for the North, I passed a funeral procession, that of a little child. Its coffin, covered in pink cloth, was carried by some women. Over the face of the baby was spread a white cloth, while the lid of the casket was carried by a small girl in front. At the head of the procession walked a man bearing the tombstone—one of those queer Russian crosses in wood upon which a brass plate with the inscription was fastened, while near the base of the staff a footpiece was nailed on obliquely. Apparently no sorrow was felt; certainly none was shown, and no one wore black, and by now the baby sleeps its long sleep under the shadow of its cross. Forgotten? Perhaps; yet "Never a sparrow falleth." It was a sad sight and depressing; also these pavements and Casimir's conceit are getting on my nerves. I shall be glad to leave, even though it be over the Caspian again. Late at night I board one of the small steamers, this time headed for Krasnovodsk in Turkestan.



CHAPTER XXI

ACROSS THE CASPIAN

THE sea this morning is blue and beautiful beyond the capes, as the sun lights up the glittering surface; but around us it is covered with a scum of oil, and nearer to Black Town it is one of the show sights to light up this floating petroleum, thereby causing the waters to blaze for miles in fierce conflagration. At night such a sight would be grand and peculiar.

We are blessed with fine weather. The coast has sunken to that low yellow line so familiar to you who have sailed these Eastern seas. There are many sails in sight, gliding to the distant fisheries. Yet, the prospect is a lonely one—perhaps because of our knowledge of the fact that those same sails have not the freedom of the world, but must for ever glide up and down, ghost-like, upon the bosom of this inland water. A ship should, like a bird, be free; but these are imprisoned in the Caspian. Given a love of history and geography, what can be more charming than this drifting over the world? The former peoples all countries with almost personal friends, while the latter enables one to place them properly upon the map and to comprehend fully their own and the

surrounding countries. For ever hereafter, when even casual mention is made of the Caspian, I shall, forgetting its storms, see in my mind this fair, blue, inland ocean, and almost feel the presence of adjacent Persia, Turkestan, Georgia, Russia, and Siberia, while the forms and histories of those who have made them famous will come trooping over the bridges of the years in stately armies. Believe me, you cannot really enjoy travel until you get beyond and away from the influence of the world's great centres of population; until you can leave the rush and unrest entirely out of your days and allow them to glide onward, living only in the present moment. We are so far from all, and getting daily so much farther, that such things as stocks and bonds, Parliament and Congress, the repeal of the tariff, presidents and kings, have ceased entirely to interest us.

I have just returned from an exploring expedition, down below on this good steamship *Alexis*, which nearly created a riot. Well, when one cannot read the names, how is one to know what is behind closed doors until one opens them? I opened indiscriminately, and, as I said before, nearly created a riot. A single volley of Russian is quite sufficient to knock down a stranger without using weapons. It is, indeed, a terrible language, and seems shot out of the mouth in squares, triangles, and parallelograms. We are in the habit of classing it as a language of little use, as being spoken only in an out-of-the-way country; but when you find yourself in the midst of a nation of one hundred and forty millions of people who speak it and little else, you cannot but regret that it has not been consid-

ered of enough importance in the Western nations to teach at least the rudiments thereof. In the greater cities, French is spoken by the upper classes, but out here not one word of anything save Russian; and the signs and gestures that have been such an assistance in other tongues, and that we had hoped were common to all, are failures here. So you may understand how hopeless and lost we feel. Of course, through the length and breadth of these vast dominions there are many languages, especially amongst the tribes of Asia—but the Russian tongue is to them what our English is to the rest of the world. The traveller of to-day in Holy Russia gradually learns to appreciate what these people mean when they state that Russia is a world in herself—separate and apart from all other peoples. One almost has the feeling of a wall built along her western borders over which, if one gazed, one might see the rest of Europe looking very small and far away, and of not much importance to the world around one.

It has taken us twenty-two hours to run the width of this sea, one hundred and ninety-two miles, and now we rest some two miles from land, safely stuck in the mud. If that is land, I doubt my desire to leave the ship. How hot and how torrid it looks! Vast stretches of low sand-dunes glow bright and yellow under a hot sun; a few oil-tanks, some lonely looking ships, and a dozen or more wretched houses, with the inevitable green domes of a Russian church rising in their midst. That is Krasnovodsk, where we hope to enter Asia. If all the tales are true, we shall wish we had never attempted

it. This is cool weather, and we are assured that it will not be more than one hundred degrees Fahrenheit in the train. Next month and the month after, the heat mounts to one hundred and forty-five and one hundred and fifty degrees.

If you were asked the locality of the desert you would immediately point to the great Sahara; but that is but a fragment of the mighty whole. To that must be added almost all of Arabia, Persia, Beloochistan, Afghanistan, and, stretching northward, the yellow waves of sand cover the most of Turkestan, and spread on the north far into Siberia, only to change their desolation for that of the steppes, which in their turn give place to a frozen ocean. To the eastward the Gobi Desert spreads away, while to the southward the great mountains form the barriers of these oceans of sand and desolate plains. The fertile and habitable portions form merely an oasis now and then, or fringe the banks of some river or the foothills of the mountains. All the rest, illimitable and vast, is sand—or yellow plains—generally fine, yellow, drifting sand, changing every hour with the passing winds, so that the very features of a district familiar to you to-day are so utterly altered by the morrow that you know it not. Here the nations of Europe pour the life-blood of their best and bravest, contending ever with each other for the possession of countries over which wild nature does not intend that other than herself shall hold dominion; and man's combined forces cannot wrest these lands from her unwilling hand. In all the nine hundred miles between here and Samarkand, there are but two or three towns

of any size; the rest is desolation most profound; and yet Russia claims to have conquered it. Perhaps so, so far as the few wandering tribes are concerned; but the drifting waves of sand, the heat, and the cholera are the true monarchs of these desolate regions—are and have been since time was; and strive as man may nature will conquer him, grind him down under this yellow earth. In Persia and Central Asia the traveller enters the cradle of the races; from here and there they spread over all the earth, and yet to-day those that live are as nothing to the tribes that slumber around them. Where was the Garden of Eden,—might not the oasis of Merv claim it equally with the valley of Mesopotamia? At all events, from that spot spread the races of man, and this region before us teemed with countless millions. Yet to-day you might say that they are gone utterly, for, travel as you will in all directions, you will meet but a few scattered tribes; nothing, less than nothing, in comparison to those which are gone.

Limitless waves of yellow sand, barren plain, and silence—that is all. But—to return to our ship.





CHAPTER XXII

TURKOMANIA, TURKESTAN, AND THE TRANS-CASPIAN RAILWAY

AS the result of our running aground, we shall be detained and have luncheon aboard. Not a bad arrangement, as there is no good place, I am told, in that town yonder. The two hundred army recruits have already departed. The old Turk on the forward deck has gathered his harem into a dark corner, to seclude it from our prying eyes and cameras. According to the captain, these Persians working here are men of marvellous strength; not in the arms, but in the back. It is a common thing for one of them to carry thirty pouds—a Russian poud being equal to forty pounds English. Over one thousand pounds is certainly a good load. Our captain is a blonde, with blue eyes and a quick temper, and is rather indignant that we venture to doubt the statement. Casimir says it is all nonsense; that a horse could not do it. Yet Sandow lifted three hundred and twenty pounds and raised it over his head by one arm. A Turk is supposed to be able to carry a piano on his head, when once it is placed there. Take the statement for what it is worth, and do not try the experiment.

Freed from the mud at last, our ship steamed slowly over the waters and tied up alongside the wharf. After luncheon, we started out for customs and passport inspections, and met for the first time any difficulty with either. The former bothered us not at all; but when we came to the latter, it was discovered that F—— could pass, permission having arrived for him, but I "must return on the steamer." The prospect outside was not such as to make me greatly regret it, but opposition to further progress had swept aside all feelings save an intense desire to enter this land if I died for it. I was told flatly to return. There were many consultations with white-capped, ceremonious officials, much bowing and scraping, much intercession by an officer we had met on the ship. I showed my numerous papers: first, my own American passport; second, my Chinese pass; third, my letter of admission from the high officials at St. Petersburg; and, fourth, my telegram from the governor, at Askhabad, stating that I was to be admitted. "No, it must be an error." At last, it was arranged that the chief here wire to the governor at Askhabad, and make inquiries in my behalf. So they vanished, and left F—— and me looking each other blankly in the face.

"What shall you do?" he asked.

"Go back, I fancy."

"You might wait here three days."

"Yes, and sleep on that stove in the waiting-room. It is the coolest thing in sight."

"Oh, well; you may go on. You have six hours in which to hear from Askhabad."

"Yes, I think I shall go. But out of abundance of precaution, we had better arrange matters about the things we own in common."

So we reckoned and settled up. I bestowed my new bed and cork mattress upon him as a gift, with my benediction; and just as he was about to pay me for my half in our other belongings, in came the same official, and, with the deepest salaam, informed me that it was his pleasure to allow me to pass; that the telegram had arrived this morning, but his gens-d'armes had secreted it. I bowed with the greatest ceremony, as though I believed the statement, and he retired. The whole thing was simply either a bit of blackmail or a bluff to try and scare me off, but my insisting upon a telegram to Askhabad forced them to show their hands. I was somewhat surprised that they gave in at last. All this came, of course, from their fear that I am an Englishman. Men of that nation are not welcome in Central Asia.

Krasnovodsk, the present point of departure for the Trans-Caspian Railway, sixty miles to the north-west of Usin Ada, is a decided improvement on the latter town in every respect. Its harbour is better and it shortens the sea route by some seventy miles. It is a busy, thriving settlement, of some fifteen thousand inhabitants, exactly like all the other Russian towns of medium size, from end to end of this vast Empire.

The place boasts electric lights and is backed by a range of desert mountains, which to-day glitter and glow against the deep blue sky beyond them.

The railway station is a handsome structure, but when the train draws up we find our old friend of

some years ago, just as crude and uncomfortable as ever (an emigrant train in every respect when compared with that luxurious affair on the Siberian Railway).

At Usin Ada the scenery becomes familiar as the plains of Turkomania spread away before our vision.

Russia occupied Turkestan in 1865, but not until '73 did her Government make a move towards the building of that greatest of all civilisers, the railway. In the year '73 a line from Orenburg to Tashkend was talked of, and Ferdinand de Lesseps was consulted upon the feasibility of its construction. The Frenchman's ideas were always on a large scale, and here he conceived nothing less than a road from Calais to Calcutta—some 7500 miles. The line was to be built and owned, partly in the north by Russia, and the southern sections by England. Russia was favourable to the project, England was not, and so the scheme came to naught.

The scene of the next and more successful move was Turkomania or Trans-Caspia. Russia's military movements in the direction of that section rendered a railway a necessity, and in 1880 the work was begun when Skobeleff was given full power in the construction.

Curzon tells us that an American named Berry offered to construct 145 miles of the road at his own expense with materials brought from some abandoned road in the United States. Upon completion he was to hand the road over to the Government, or to continue the work with an annual State guarantee of £132,000 sterling. The proposition was refused. For some time no regular railroad was contemplated,

but merely a train for the transportation of supplies for the Army. Such was Skobeleff's intention, but General Annenkoff was all the time at work perfecting an organisation for the construction of a regular railroad, and in December, 1881, he had his trains running into Kizil Arvat, 145 miles from the Caspian. To-day the line extends through Merv, Bokhara, and Samarkand to Andishan, some thirteen hundred miles eastward of the sea, where the mountains of the Alai bar the way to farther progress. Whether Russia will consider it worth her while to cross or tunnel that range, and to what point she will direct her line if she does so, remains for the future to unfold. Certainly the approach to India, if she desires it, does not lie in that direction, but through Herat. But I do not think she desires to enter India. The rest of Asia (not a small section) is large enough to fill even the ambitious designs of the northern power for, one would think, a century at least. Projecting the Trans-Caspian Road over these mountains to Kashgar would not be a very tremendous task. She can there turn northward through Kuldja toward her Siberian Road, and, in time, eastward through the Gobi Desert and the heart of China. Such a project a century ago would have been laughed at, but it is more than possible now. The nine hundred miles to Samarkand were completed in 1888, and when I first visited that city in 1894, it was still the eastern terminus. To-day Andishan claims that distinction, and there the iron horse pauses to inquire, "Whither next?"

Even as this question is asked comes the answer, and we are informed that through the co-operation

of Germany and Russia great changes are in prospect through the very centre of Asia—that:

"It was announced some time back that the preliminary explorations for a railway from Andijan, the present terminus of Russia's central Asian line, to Lan-chau, on the Hoang-ho, in the centre of the Chinese province of Kansuh, had been completed and that the surveys would begin in due course. The line which it is said the Russian Government has decided to adopt will extend from Andijan to Kashgar, the capital of Chinese Turkestan, thence through Maralbash, on the Yarkand Darya, in a northerly direction to Ak-su, on another branch of that river. From there it will run in an easterly direction to Korla, on a river running into the lake Bostu Nor, and on to Turfan, on the south side of the mountains which separate Turkestan from Mongolia. Taking an easterly direction, the line continues to Khamil, or Hami, the meeting-place of caravan routes from all parts of Asia. From here the trace adopted runs continuously nearly south-east to Lan-chau, on the Hoang-ho. The distance is estimated at about sixteen hundred miles, and between Kashgar and Lan-chau there are few points where the altitude of the line reaches five thousand feet; the greater part of the trace is under four thousand and in the water zone — an important point.

"The explorations for this line have been going on for the last twenty-five years, but very actively of late. Among the principal explorers were the indefatigable Przjevalsky, Pevisov, Potanin, and Roborovski, who laid down the outlines that have been

filled in by their successors. This is the Russian contribution to what will be a great central Asian trunk line.

"The other end begins at Tsing-tau, on the German concession at Kiao-chau in Shantung, and the first section of it from there to Tsi-nan-fu, the capital of the province, has just been opened by the running of a train between the two points, and effusive congratulations were exchanged by the German Kaiser and the Governor of Shantung, Chu-fu. Significantly enough, the despatch announcing these auspicious events stated that on the same day a 'relief' draft of a thousand men left Germany for Tsing-tau.

"This Tsing-tau and Tsi-nan-fu section is part of the line which will eventually reach Singan-fu, the ancient capital of China, and only some three hundred and fifty miles from Lan-chau, the present projected terminus of the Russian line already described. That these two points would be connected sooner or later goes without saying, and a traveller from the West would have the option, according to the season of the year, of making a trip to China by the Trans-Siberian or the Asiatic Grand Central.

"From a political and military point of view the construction of the Russian central line would be an event of the highest importance. In the contingency of a war between a European continental combination, to which Russia was a party, and one or more sea Powers there would be no longer a question of maintaining war fleets in the China seas so far as those European Powers were concerned, nor need they maintain expensive garrisons along

the coasts in ordinary times. For all practical purposes European and Chinese interests would coincide, and against aggression from the sea the soldiers of Germany, Russia, France, and other Continental Powers might be found fighting side by side, in defence of their consolidated interests in Asia. In course of time, these trans-Asian railways will, through the operation of financial and commercial causes, be matters of European concern, and as the fiscal systems of the various European Continental countries are harmonised through commercial treaties they will become part of the one system that will eventually bind Asia and Continental Europe together and render them both, in war time at least, independent of communications by sea."

In addition to the above, one may add the report of that line from Irkutsk towards Peking and also of a road from Enzeli to Teheran which, together with the line from Tabriz, will do more for Persia than all of her ancient rulers combined. The accompanying map will show what Russia has done and will do for the development of Asia. That the Czar is a good man and a peace-loving man there is not the slightest shadow of doubt. He sought by every honourable means to avoid this conflict with Japan. Russia has her interests in Manchuria to protect, and vast interests they are. To ask her to abandon them without argument at the peremptory demands of these Asiatics, whose fanaticism led them to attack her before making a declaration of war, and without waiting to hear her reply to their latest demand, is preposterous.

But to return to the Trans-Caspian Railway.

Let us set forth in its charge toward the borders of China, over plains and vast rivers, through deserts of black sand and ruined cities of the past, under the walls of barbarous Bokhara and fair Samarkand, till we reach the valley of the high Alai where the edelweiss grows star-spangled over the grass amidst the peace of the mountains.

From end to end this railway is a military affair. You will find soldiers on the engines and in the stations, and in almost all other positions. The Army was used in its construction and has since been employed in its operation. The gauge is five feet, and the rails are of steel, from nineteen to twenty-two feet long, and laid upon wooden sleepers, simply spiked down as were our roads some years ago. Every item of the construction was brought from Russia—nothing could be obtained in Trans-Caspia—so that the sleepers, delivered, cost three shillings each. The stations are of stone or of brick taken from the ruined cities which fairly line the route between Kizil Arvat and the desert. Curzon tells us that there were battalions of from one thousand to fifteen hundred men employed in the work, and of unskilled labour some twenty thousand drawn from the native population. They built the roadway—not a difficult work—and the soldiers laid the rails, receiving pay at the rate of from ten shillings to £1 sterling per month, while the natives were paid from four to eight pence per day. The constructors of this road had much greater difficulties to contend with than either those of our Western lines or those of the Siberian Railway, as both food and water had to be drawn from a long distance. On the one hun-

dred and fifty miles from Merv to the Oxus there was absolutely nothing to sustain human life and everything to destroy it,—a region deserted by God. On the whole, the road is considered to be a cheap one as to the price of construction, varying from £2700 to £5000 per mile. Mechanically, aside from the desert, it was not a difficult road to build. There are no tunnels and but two rivers of any size, and the land is flat. With the gradual reconstruction of the line, the speed of the trains will be increased. In 1894, sixty-four hours were consumed in the nine hundred miles to Samarkand. In 1903 that time has been reduced to forty-eight hours, and Tashkend, 1164 miles out, is reached in sixty-four hours. Fifteen miles an hour was considered fair time in 1894.

Scientists have decided that the ancient river-bed through which this road runs for three or four hours' time east from the Caspian is that of the Amu Daria, or Oxus, which now empties into the Sea of Aral.

Leaving this river-bed and mounting to the plain, our train crosses an arm of the Black Sand Desert, fifty miles in width, until Kizil Arvat is reached, when it enters the Turkoman plains, which border the foothills of the mountains: until Askhabad is passed and Merv be reached we shall traverse these plains—the home of the great robber tribes of the Turkomans. All who have read *Hajji Baba* will feel at home here. As our train crawls along we pass innumerable tents of these people, now all settled down into law-abiding citizens by the arm of the Czar. Physically these men are very fine, generally above the medium in height and always erect

and stately. Their life of freedom and exercise on these plains has endowed them with health and vigour lasting late in life. They seem to prefer a solitary existence, as one rarely sees their tents in clusters—generally each stands separate and apart from its neighbour, and all are of unusual size. Some must be twenty-five feet in diameter. They are always circular, the covering of skins being supported on a wooden frame. There are evidently social degrees amongst these people—a man's standing seems gauged by the size of his tent. One does not see much evidence of female beauty, but the love of dress and jewels is not a stranger to these women. They cover themselves with ornaments of all sorts.

In China female children are thrown by the wayside to die, but here they bring many roubles to their father when they marry,—sometimes as high as fifteen hundred.

These people are herdsmen; they will not cultivate the soil. They own immense herds of sheep, goats, and camels, and they own many horses of sturdy breed and great endurance.

In our carriage F—— and I insist upon a section apiece, much to the astonishment of numberless prosperous merchants, who would be pleased to join us, in fact, sit all over us while they examine us and our belongings, as a child would a box of new toys. This we will not permit, and truth compels us to state that they smell and are otherwise objectionable. So we put them out, bags and bundles, and they roll off into another car.

There are two or three other men in this, and one

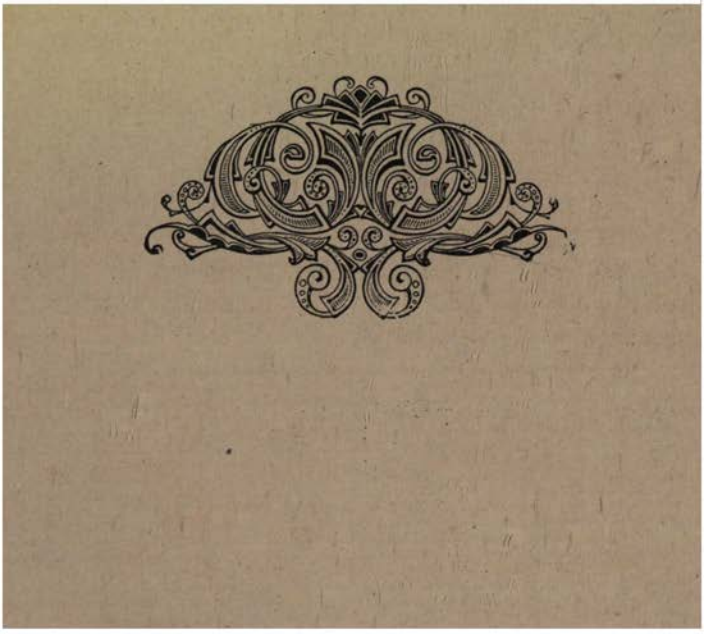
woman. Poor creature! when we reach Bokhara, she is so bedraggled and dust-laden that her sex is in doubt.

In the other car there are many Russians *en route* to Tashkend—one being an aide to the governor-general—a charming young man, gorgeous in a crimson and gold uniform. I found him later on, crimson as to face also because of too much wine. How can men use it in such heat?

In the forward car, the third class are huddled together like sheep, and the thing reeks with dirt and bad smells. In the open air these Orientals do not seem to be uncleanly, but they require plenty of air and sunshine to produce a cleanly appearance.

As I look out over the world this morning, the desert spreads away to the westward, a dead level of plain and sage-brush; and across the great red disk of the rising sun slowly passes a long string of camels, led by a man on a small donkey. Horses have disappeared. These deserts of Trans-Caspia are traversed by the camel and donkey only. Out of the other window one catches a glimpse of the mountains of Persia. F—— remarks that the thermometer registers eighty-two—not bad for early morning, and yet it is very comfortable. "More anon," Sol seems to say as he rises higher and higher over this kingdom where he reigns supreme. High noon, with the thermometer showing ninety-four; yet the strong wind which sweeps through the car not only makes us comfortable, but has carried off my white umbrella—no small loss in such a land of fire. Over all the stretches of the desert outside hangs a quivering hot haze, through which a cross on a

lonely grave looms ghost-like; majestic dust-spouts travel swiftly along, while here and there a deserted village shows where man has given up the struggle. Nothing living in view, except one lonely camel!





CHAPTER XXIII

GOEK TEPE AND ITS CAPTURE

IT is mid-afternoon as our train draws up at a station bearing a name known the wide world over for what happened here. To-day the sun throws its light down with a piercing brilliancy as though he, too, would search out the truth as to Goek Tepe and her terrible story. The great western rampart with a mound towering above it is the first view one obtains as the train draws up. The entire enclosure is some two miles in circuit, and its wall is still some fifteen feet in height, though half that height was stripped off to cover the dead slain here. What is left is pitted by the holes made by the Russian shells, and near us are the trenches made by the mines. To the south of the railway station is the site of the Russian camp which the besieged so vainly endeavoured to destroy. The embankment of the fort carries on its summit two lofty battlements, and the whole is made of mud.

"General Grodekoff in his work (chaps. xiv., xv.) supplies the following details of the Turkoman fortress: It was a quadrilateral enclosure, its north and south sides measuring respectively 980 and 560

yards, its eastern and western faces 1680 and 1575 yards. The wall consisted of an earthen rampart, 35 feet thick at the base, and from 21 to 28 feet thick at the top, and 15 feet high, thrown up and trodden hard by men and horses, and then covered with a five-foot coating of mud. On the top of the wall were an inner and an outer parapet 4½ feet high, and respectively 2¼ and 3 feet thick, with a large number of traverses, designed to prolong the defence, even against an enemy who had penetrated to the interior. In the outer parapet loopholes were cut 9 inches wide, at a distance of 3½ feet apart. All round the outside was a ditch, with varying depth of from 6 to 9 feet, and breadth of from 12 to 17 feet; the scarp and counterscarp being almost perpendicular, and rifle-pits and steps being dug in places out of the latter. In the inside, at the foot of the wall, was also a trench, 42 feet broad, but only from one foot to 2¼ feet in depth. There were twenty-one gates or openings in the walls, masked by large semicircular traverses outside, the ditch being crossed by dykes. A branch from the Sakiz Yeb stream was conducted into the fort through one of these openings, and having been separated into two channels, passed out again. A broad open space ran down the centre of the enclosure, but in the remaining area it was calculated that there were pitched thirteen thousand kibitkas."

There are few signs of the conflict aside from the destroyed walls visible to-day, but Curzon tells us that "long after the battle it was impossible to ride over the plains without the horse-hoofs crushing into human skulls."

It was in December, 1880, that Skobeleff with seven thousand men and sixty guns invested Goek Tepe, or rather Denghil Tepe, which is the correct name of the fortress, within whose walls were gathered, under the command of Makdum Kuli Khan, the best of the Tekkes with their families—thirty-five thousand persons assisted by ten thousand horsemen. Russia pushed her parallels steadily forward until close to the embankment and then began to dig her mines but seventy yards away, in plain sight of the besieged, who were at a loss to know what it meant. While all this was being done the sorties were many and desperate, but to no effect, and on the morning of January 24th the mines were fired, and through the breaches made the Russians entered and engaged in a desperate struggle with the besieged, more of a slaughter than a battle; and during the entire time the Russian bands were playing and colours flying. The fort was attacked also on its western face, and the battle lasted but an hour. Then followed that which all civilised peoples must consider as a blot upon Russian honour. Hours after the Russian eagles had been raised over Goek Tepe, Skobeleff led his forces out of the fort and ordered a pursuit with no quarter. While light lasted the slaughter continued, not only in the fort but far out over the plains around until the dead lay like ridges of sand. Eight thousand persons of both sexes and all ages were cut down outside the fort, while 6500 corpses of men and some thousands of living women and children were found within the walls. General Grodekoff states that there, too, the slaughter continued until out of the forty-five thousand

in Goek Tepe before the assault but five thousand were left—all women and children. Some six hundred Persian prisoners in fetters were spared and finally sent to their homes. The Russians lost but sixty killed and 340 wounded—all this to the sound of triumphant martial music. Is it to be wondered at that to this day music strikes terror to the hearts of the few who survived? and when, on the occasion of the opening of the railway, a sudden burst of melody was heard, men and women went down on their knees in the desert, praying for mercy and life, so convinced were they that the sound meant death.

Goek Tepe is silent and lonely to-day. As far as the eye can reach rise the small clay watch-towers of the Turkomans, and the rectangular walled forts with towers at the corners; but no life or movement anywhere, save it be some moving column of dust or some wolfish-looking dogs. For nearly a week the Russian soldiers were allowed to loot this captured fortress, and three million roubles' worth of plunder was carried off. These plains had been accustomed to sights of horror,—Jenghiz Khan had passed this way,—but it remained for Christian Russia to eclipse all that had gone before.

Though nothing can excuse such slaughter, it may be claimed, on the other hand, that these Tekkes were a barbarous, savage people, and that this land, necessary to the progress of civilised man, could not be conquered in any other way.

All that, Russia may hold up to that final pursuit and slaughter which all the world condemns, and Russia's only excuse must be that her General was a raving maniac in time of battle. As for her soldiers,

they do as ordered. An American or English army of to-day would not have obeyed such orders of slaughter, even if it is supposable that they be issued, which, thank God! it is not.

General Skobeleff, with his bloody eyes and white uniform, always reminds one of Nero. He seems to have enjoyed the mere sight and spilling of blood, and was cruel through and through. After the slaughter he remarked, as one would have expected the Roman tyrant to have done, "How unutterably bored I am!" Surely it needs but a musical instrument in his hands and the costume of old Rome to complete the picture. He bore a charmed life on the field of battle, but it would have been better otherwise than to have ended as he did.

As for the Turkomans, they are inhumanly cruel. Upon the destruction of the Persian Army in 1860, several thousand captives were brought into Turkomania, and there they languished, actually in chains, until Russia freed them when she annexed the land.

It is the custom not only in England but in America to rail against the broken promises of Russia in this section of the world. But look at the conditions here before and since the annexation. In the old days human life was worth nothing here: no stranger dared enter the land, which was overrun by bands of robbers and murderers. Slavery was rampant, and human degradation at its lowest point. To-day these same people are living in peace. Slavery is unknown, murder and crime are surely punished, while you may travel here in perfect safety. Russia may have broken her paper promises to these people, but it was done for the benefit of

the land. These people were murderers who would have cut her throat promptly had she not done just as she did.

Utterly lawless at home, they were far worse abroad. Before the advent of Russia they were masters of the whole country, attacking not merely caravans but towns and cities. In one section of Heri Rud alone but twenty villages now remain where there were once 460. On the occasion of every raid they would take away as many men and women as they desired for slaves, and the rest were either killed outright or maimed by having their hands and feet cut off. The world has no conception of the fearful slave-trade of these people. A few years since there were more than one hundred thousand slaves in this section alone, and in the past forty years over two hundred thousand Persians have been carried off to death or a life far worse than any death.

These Turkomans acknowledged no authority, they had no government; every man was supposed to be free. *Force* was the only power they feared, and custom or "deb" the only law they bowed to. They were divided into clans with a chief, but chief in name only. While a clan retained its strength it generally controlled those around it, but when that passed away, as it always did, their day was over.

When these facts are remembered, even Goek Tepe loses much of its horror.

As the Turkomans were cruel so they were unfit to govern, and by that law which has controlled the destinies of all the peoples of the world, Turkomania has passed into the hands of a nation which can do

so. Such was the case with the Spanish Empire. Such will be the case with all nations to the end of time. The survival of the fittest.

The conquest of Turkomania and Turkestan has relieved Central Asia from perpetual devastation and has rendered life secure and agriculture possible. Does Russia intend to stop with the conquest of Central Asia, or will she move southward through Persia until the southern seas be reached? It is galling to her that with her vast extent she has so little seacoast,—is, in fact, bottled up. How long will she endure this, and what will England have to say when the cork comes out of that bottle? In the meantime the Government of the Czar will shove its borders steadily if slowly outward in all directions, and in Persia will do everything in its power to keep the land under its influence until times are ripe for further movements of the Russian bear.



CHAPTER XXIV

THROUGH THE BLACK SAND TO BOKHARA

ASKHABAD is passed at 11 A.M. The train stops there for thirty minutes, for no apparent reason, unless it be an unwillingness on the part of the engine to start again over the sultry plains. Askhabad is a town of about fifteen thousand inhabitants, and is the place where five thousand of them died from cholera two years ago. There are no reports of that terrible scourge as yet, but it may come later, by which time we shall be well on into the mountains. F. has just fished the thermometer out of his bag and reads with great gusto, "Ninety-eight degrees"; but it is not uncomfortable. The sun has been hazy all day, and now has retired behind clouds of sand.

June 6th.

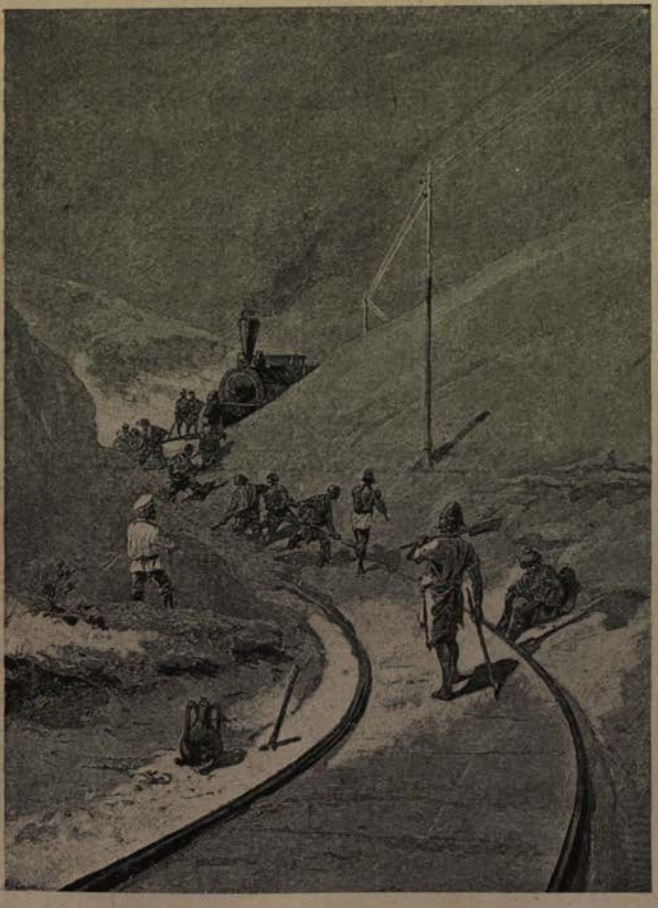
A terrific wind, which invades and sobs around the train all night, as we enter the Black Desert, fills every corner of the car with sand. Still I decline to allow my window to be closed, preferring burial alive to suffocation by heat. The night, after all, has not been an uncomfortable one. Casimir arrives back from some forward part of the train, asking whether

we want tea; also informing us that the kitchen car is on fire. Serious for us, if it is so, as there are no eating-houses in all these nine hundred miles. We carry a dining- and a kitchen-car with us. You would smile at the former, though it seems fine to us here—a freight-car painted white, with a bench down the centre, around which are some chairs. The messes served are something terrible. We confine our orders, perforce, to beefsteak, which is well cooked. The tea and bread are good, and we drink the milk, but have long since ceased to discuss as to what kind of animal it comes from—an oil-tank, I should say, from the taste. One cannot see fifty yards into the desolation that surrounds the train, and does not desire to. Surely out there without shelter human life could not endure for a day. There is no water in all the distance from Merv to the Oxus. In our whole land, from the Llano Estacado to the Bad Lands, from Maine to California, we have nothing so terrible as this Black Desert. As I look from my window, about noon, it reminds me of the ocean in its wildest moments of tempest, when the spray blows high over the masts. Yet that seems all life and freshness; this is death. A terrible sun vainly tries to banish the whirlwinds of sand that blow furiously along, making the sand waves with their crest of sage-brush appear indistinct. Our carriage is choked with sand; and yet we have to thank it and the winds for a temperature amounting only to ninety degrees. There is not a bit of cultivation in all the distance traversed; no green, save in patches, on which the few miserable natives cower shudderingly.

Many plans were adopted to overcome this desert and build the railway, soaking with sea water and so solidifying the sand, coating it with clay, etc., where the line was to be laid. Tamarisk was planted, also wild oats, desert shrubs, and the "saxdoul," whose sturdy roots penetrate far underground, were brought in as allies in the work, but all this is often of little use, and, until the desert can be wiped out, must be for ever continued. The residual naphtha, the refuse left over from the petroleum, is the only fuel used on the line, for no coal or wood can be procured, certainly none of the former, while the latter is too valuable. The refuse used for this purpose amounts to many millions annually. It is transported in cistern cars and is stored along the line in huge tanks. Its economy is six times that of coal and it is twice as efficient in generating steam. The people use it for illuminating and for heat.

Travelling in India is luxury when compared with this. There the cars are roomy and possessed of quite good toilet-rooms. Every window has its stained glass to protect one from the glare of the sun. There are also the "tatties," or curtains of straw, over which water runs, and through which the hot air in passing is changed to a cool, refreshing breeze. Here nothing is done to make travel other than most uncomfortable, the cars possessing absolutely no pretence of comfort. The fruits are not yet ripe, and I cannot imagine how the Russians endure the messes upon which they live, and upon which they pour quantities of liquors of all sorts, until their skins look ready to burst.

All day Nature remains kindly disposed in our



CLEARING SAND FROM TRANS-CASPIAN RAILWAY

case, as the sun keeps hidden most of the time. One poor German looked up at me this morning and congratulated me upon the weather. Then, dropping his head, he moaned out: "But I must return next month, when it will be hell, hell." So, if you must come here, select your season. It is too late even now (June); but, as I have said, we are favoured with a clouded sun.

TCHARJUI, ON THE OXUS RIVER.

We have just crossed the Oxus, which here is about two miles wide. It is divided into several streams, and its waters are as muddy as those of the Missouri. At one time in its history it flowed into the Caspian near "Usin Ada," but now it flows into the Sea of Aral. What convulsions of nature must have been necessary to effect such a change! I had hoped that the influence of the great river would banish the desert; but even before our nostrils have lost the pleasant, fresh smell of its mighty current, our eyes are blinded by the sand clouds, and the waves of the desert have closed in around us once more, blacker than before if that be possible, for now not even the sage-brush breaks the dreary monotony. We are on time, however, and three hours more will bring us to Bokhara. It has been without exception the worst railway ride I have ever taken, and yet we have seen it under its most favourable aspects; but we are not done with it yet. As the day declines, the winds increase to almost a hurricane, involving us in the midst of one of those terrible sand-storms that one associates with the great Sahara. Our engine labours as though in

pain, and comes often to a standstill, until we are dug out. I think six hours' halt would find a train almost buried out of sight; but we do manage to creep on now and then. Every moment or so, some louder shrieking of the elements or rattle of sand against the train causes the Russians to look up and dismally shake their heads. The sun has been hidden all day, and now all is grey and gloomy. Still, as I have said before, this is called an exceptionally good trip, though we are certainly well exhausted when Bokhara station is reached.



CHAPTER XXV

BOKHARA "THE NOBLE"—THE BARBAROUS ORIENT

June 8th.

THE name of this ancient metropolis is derived from the Sanskrit "Vihara," a monastery, showing that even across the Kara Kum desert the shadow of Buddha had fallen and rested on this far northern city. Bokhara stands in a veritable paradise compared to the desert, and all the valley around it evidences the exuberant richness of long cultivation. Here again are trees of some size, and the multitude of fruit trees show what a feast the traveller may expect next month. As one approaches the city from the Amu-Daria (Oxus), one first notices a stately minaret, or rather a column, more like the Kutub-Minar at Delhi than the usual minarets of the Orient. Soon two great domes appear in sight, and the traveller collects rugs and belongings in order to be ready to leave the stuffy, dirty car, but the train rushes onward past minarets and domes, past houses and gardens, until he feels that some mistake has been made and that that was not, after all, Bokhara "the Noble," yet what other place exists hereabouts? Some ten miles east of the city the station of Kangan is reached. It was

placed at that distance from the city because of the distrust of the railways always exhibited by Orientals until they see the cars, when childlike suspicion is overcome by curiosity, and from the starting of the first train until to-day every third-class carriage has been crowded, as in India, with a motley assemblage of natives wholly delighted with the motion. The "invention of the devil" has ceased to alarm, has greatly decreased the power of the Amir, and increased that of Russia. The Amir is prevented by dignity from gratifying his curiosity, which is as intense as the lowest in his realm.

Bokhara, a city of seventy thousand people, with her state maintains a semblance of independence and is allowed to do so through the policy of Russia, whose representative, the governor-general at Tashkend, told us that he never had visited and never could visit Bokhara until Russia assumed in name the control thereof. Were he to go now it would be most embarrassing, for were the Amir to receive him as became his state and the glory of the Czar, the people of Bokhara would at once say, "Here is one greater than our ruler," and would cease to respect or obey the latter; while if the attention paid were less than that the Amir receives, they would at once cease to fear Russia and there would be trouble; therefore it is best to stay away.

As long ago as the tenth century this city of Central Asia was spoken of by travellers, and it was old, very old, even then. Here "in the winter of B.C. 328, in the 'Royal Chase,' undisturbed for generations, Alexander the Great and his officers slew four thousand animals, and here Alexander himself over-

came a lion, Samson-like, in single combat." Not until 700 A.D. did Bokhara emerge from the darkness, since which time it has been conquered and reconquered so many times that anything like a permanent rule has been impossible. In 1400, Timur —Tamerlane—established a Tartar dynasty lasting one hundred years, after which tribe after tribe conquered Bokhara down to the present day, when, under Russian rule, she is more prosperous than she has been for centuries.

Good Queen Bess had an ambassador out here in 1572 named Jenkenson. The eighteenth century holds the names of but two travellers who in all its hundred years penetrated to this remote city. In our century they have increased somewhat, but still travellers are few and far between, and their movements are known and watched. We two are, I think, the only strangers, and I know that I am the only American in all the land, from the Caspian to the China frontier, from which we hear rumours of the approach *via* Kashgar, hearing even their names, of two Englishmen. Can you imagine such a state of affairs in America, where all the peoples of the earth pour in as free as the waters of the ocean, though much to our discomfort and sometimes almost to our undoing? Two men in the early part of this century reached Bokhara after six years' wandering from India. Here they remained some five months, and departed only to die in the desert beyond. Curzon tells of the horrible tragedy in 1842 of Stoddardt and Connolly. "Sent in 1838 and 1840 upon a mission of diplomatic negotiations to the Khanatis of Central Asia, whose sympathies

Great Britain desired to enlist in consequence of her advance into Afghanistan, they were thrown by the monster Nasrullah into a foul subterranean pit infested with vermin, were subjected to abominable torture, and finally publicly beheaded in 1842." Dr. Wolff barely escaped with his life while endeavouring to clear up their fate. For centuries Bokhara has been hidden as in the depths of midnight, coming distinctly into view only now and then as though in a blaze of lightning, during which have been seen the shadowy forms of Jenghis Khan and his savage hordes appearing on the horizon, passing with sword and flame over the ancient city, and vanishing, phantom-like, in the desert: then the city again has sunken into darkness, mysterious, romantic, and impenetrable. Our own Dr. Eugene Schuyler—he who afterward died in Egypt—visited it in 1873, under the protection of Russia; but travellers even now are few and far between.

We were two very dusty, tired men as we descended last night from the cars at this station—descended from the comparative quiet of our compartment to the midst of such a throng as can only be found at a railway station or river-bank in the Orient; a sea of black faces topped by gigantic white turbans, thousands of glittering eyes and chattering tongues, thousands of hands eager to take possession of one's luggage. No chance of hearing, no chance of progress in such cases, until you lay about you with your stick, utterly regardless of what you hit and utterly forgetful of your early religious training. You must count your packages before you leave the car, and count them

every five minutes thereafter; and last night a Russian policeman came all the way to our hotel with us and counted them after we were settled. We were marked down as eccentric when we asked for baths, and were informed that here the people bathed once a week, and that we had just missed the day. They did finally find what would pass for a tub, and we were cleansed in due course of time. F—— had telegraphed to an acquaintance in the town before we left Krasnovodsk, but the message did not reach here until about the time we did, so there was nothing for it but to come to this house. Bokhara station is twelve versts from the city; but one must stop near the station, as the city is purely Sart, and it would be difficult to pass a night in it or get anything to eat there.

Were it not for the strong arm of the Czar, we should not dare to enter Bokhara. We do dare, however; and our only concern is in the choice of carriages (we have concluded to drive and not take the branch railway), none of which look as though they would hold together for a ten-mile drive; and in the one we finally settle upon there is so strong a suspicion of bugs that we sit on the back of the seat as the safest place. A broad highway leads westward to Bokhara, crowded its entire length by hosts of picturesque natives. The East here is, in the dress of its people, still the gorgeous East of the *Arabian Nights*. Men in brilliant brocades and glittering turbans sail majestically by us; some on the little donkeys, others on fine horses; and all salute us with deep salaams. The huge "arba"—a great two-wheeled cart—rolls creakingly along; long strings

of camels regard us gravely and gossip amongst themselves concerning our curious appearance; over high mud walls catalpa and white mulberry trees cast blossoms and fruit upon our heads, and from the Sart cafés comes the aroma of tea and tobacco. Crowds are everywhere; many are taking their noonday tea and smoke at the numerous khans or cafés, where, amongst other refreshments, I see a pipe gravely carried by a small boy from one to another of the customers, each of whom as gravely takes a puff or two.

A Sart café looks like a huge, old-fashioned trundle-bed, sometimes fifteen feet square. They are generally located at the corners of the streets, and are always carpeted with fine rugs, while in one corner stands a huge smoking samovar, with its stacks of dainty teacups and porcelain pots—an Oriental never makes his tea in a metal vessel. There you may see at times crowds of men sedately consuming the dainty beverage, which is the main drink of these people. I have never known them to drink anything stronger; and I know that in the case of my guide, Rachmed, I was obliged to order him to drink cognac when he had been drenched and I feared a cold for him. These cafés are the most characteristic sight of these Far-Eastern towns, and are utterly unlike those of the more westerly Orient. But we are moving onward, past Arab khans, native mud-houses, fields of waving grain, bowers of acacia trees, flocks of sheep, and droves of donkeys bearing stately Sarts in gorgeous colours. Dirt and dust everywhere. Away to the westward a haze near the horizon shows where lies the desert.

The walls of a mud-palace, twenty-five feet high, the minarets of a mud-mosque, miles of mud-walls stretching away on either side, while a great gateway towers frowningly above us, through whose archway a long, dim vista of bazaars is to be seen, while the tombs of the dead crowd the plain before it—that is Bokhara, as we first see it.



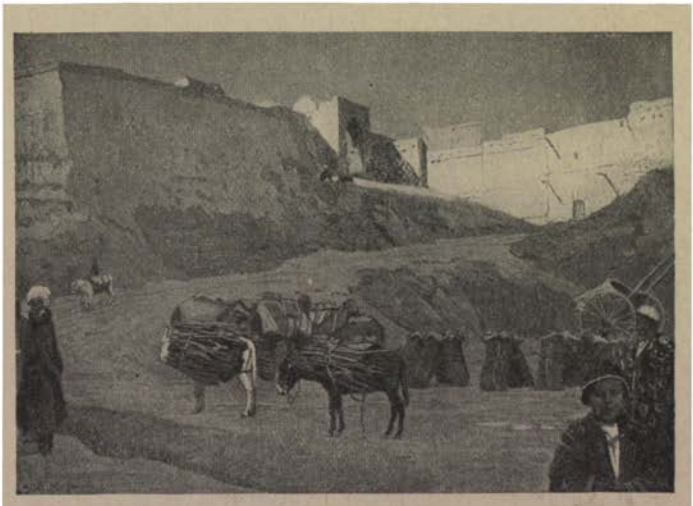
MARKET-PLACE, BOKHARA

Cairo, Tunis, Damascus, and Samarkand are, if one may use the term, the poems of the Orient; but if you would see a city more purely Oriental than any of them, you must come to Bokhara. Time, civilisation, Western progress, what you will, have produced no effect upon this barbaric city. She is not beautiful, but she fascinates, and is intolerable. She still seems the abode of horrors, and one shrinks as one's carriage rolls toward her dark,

forbidding walls and under her frowning gateways. The dungeons, where other venturesome travellers have lived horrid lives and died fearful deaths, are still here, and these people do not love us, and show it plainly. Murder, assassination, and torture most horrible appear written upon all these interminable blank walls, through which there are no openings save a low door now and then. What goes on within there, even in these enlightened days, it would not be well to attempt to discover. Even the power of the Czar would avail you naught once you were hidden behind any of them.

In the darkest days of the Bastile or Loches the prisoners in their deepest dungeons occupied luxurious quarters when compared with the wretches immured in the great prison of Bokhara. All the horrible, barbarous Orient is realised when one enters its portals outside the walls of the city and behind the palace, or fort. The traveller will approach the yellow walls over a winding, dusty road and will be met at its ruinous old gateway by the gaoler, who will conduct him with much apparent friendliness through the prison, though he hates him as a dog of a Christian and would much prefer to chain him down with his other poor wretches. The portal once passed you will enter a guard-room, vaulted and gloomy, occupied by a few guards sprawling all over the place. Its walls are ornamented with chains and handcuffs, which you may be thankful are not going to be riveted upon yourself. Passing into a courtyard you will note two prisons—one new and therefore of no especial interest—the other, mud-built, with its floor below the

level of the filthy court; its doors are of thick, worm-eaten wood and are fastened by an ancient padlock. You will descend two steps to enter, and you will leave your hope behind you if you come as a prisoner. Men are crowded here like hogs, and the air is foul past all description. It is not a large room and holds no opening for the outer air save



PRISON, BOKHARA

through the door by which you have entered, and where you must stand blinking and staring into the darkness. The wretches here are all chained, some by the ankles, some by their waists, and some wear an iron collar which is chained to the walls. Men of all classes are thrown in here, and once here there is no hope save of death, which may deliver them from a life more fearful and filthy than any death.

The inmates scarcely look up as we enter, and I would turn and depart at once, as I could never endure an inspection of the best of our prisons at home, but we have not seen the horror of horrors, and so pass through to an inner chamber of utter darkness. Here in the corner is the now filled-up pit where Stoddardt and Connolly suffered the tortures of the damned. It is strange that England deserted these men, making no effort to assist them or discover what their fate had been, though they were envoys of her Government. True, Bokhara in those days was inaccessible and no help could reach them in time, but some effort might have been made to discover what their fate had been. It was left to the Jew, Joseph Wolff, to do this, and he found that these men had been murdered three months before his arrival. It is not necessary to relate here the oft-told tale of their horrible sufferings in this black hole, with its pit infested with sheep ticks which gnawed their flesh away, or of their death by decapitation. You will scarcely find it possible to stay in this foul dungeon for a moment, but they lived for years. These Bokharans did not invent any special tortures for these Englishmen, but treated them as they would have done and do treat their own people; in fact, were rather more merciful, as they gave them the boon of decapitation, when it would have been more to their taste to have trussed and tossed both from the top of yonder great tower.

The wooden gates grate with a snarling sound as we pass outward; the gaoler grasps the fee I hand him, and if eyes speak the truth his desire to throw

me into yonder black hole, having first stripped me, is intense, and so I turn with relief to the glitter of the sunshine as it pours in hot waves over the city of Bokhara spread out before me. The air is laden with a dusty smell, the sky is deep, dark blue, against which the yellow towers are sharply silhouetted, while around the blue dome of the great mosque, and high above the tower of punishment, a flock of dazzling white storks are slowly circling.

There are three millions of fanatical Mussulmen in the khanate, of which yonder city is the capital, and if the time ever comes when Russia is in a death-struggle elsewhere they will promptly rise and cut the throats of every dog of a Christian within their limits; then they will burn the bridge over the Oxus, and, so to speak, draw the sands of the desert around them and turn their backs upon all the outer world, for which they have no use. Then another thousand years will find the city as we see it to-day. But that time has not come as yet, and Russia holds the oasis by the throat as she controls its very life through its water. Cut that and Bokhara would die the death of Merv.

When Dr. Wolff visited this city sixty years ago it had eleven gates in a wall fifteen miles in circumference. This inclosed 370 mosques and 25 caravansaries, with baths and bazaars. There was also the old palace or ark built one thousand years ago, and there were some ninety colleges. These things exist to-day, for the city has changed but little in centuries. She was probably as dilapidated then as now. As our carriage rolls between the towers and under the arch of the great gateway the glare of day

gives place to a semi-twilight. The city is cool and shadowy and quiet save for a subdued murmur from her populace. Through the crowds of people, strings of camels, and droves of donkeys, we make slow progress. There to our right is one of those huge tanks responsible for most of the epidemics that visit this place, cholera preferred. Into its waters are thrown everything, in its waters the people bathe, and these waters the people drink: so, when this has been going on for three hundred years, its waters are ripe for almost any disease. To-day they look particularly green and slimy. Crowds of curious people surround us, and near by one old man holds his particular audience spell-bound as he recites in a high, shrill voice some wonderful legend. Numerous are the vendors of fruit and vendors of sweetmeats; numerous also are the turbaned Sarts, smoking or sleeping in the shadows. As we pass down the bazaar, we are either in an intense shadow or in intense sunlight. From their little booths on both sides the solemn-faced merchants regard us earnestly; but their wares are not tempting, and there is no odour of coffee or attar of roses to induce us to tarry and purchase, as we have done through so many years and in so many bazaars throughout the Orient. Bokhara does not hold many objects of interest; one of the few, the great mosque, claims our attention for a time, and as we enter the solemn silence of its cloisters, ushered by a majestic Mussulman, the noise of the city falls away into silence. Sedate storks, that have been coming here from one generation to another, look gravely down upon us. This



TOWER OF PUNISHMENT, BOKHARA

mosque is old, very old. Its spacious courts and airy arches sprang into existence long centuries ago. Those bright blue tiles in the Holy of Holies and that glistening blue dome reflected the sunlight for the first time more than eleven hundred years ago, when England was ruled by the Saxons, France by Charlemagne; when Russia and America were solitudes most profound.

The great minaret, or tower of punishment—Minari Katian—which towers above the grand mosque, is still used as a place of public execution on great bazaar days, when the criminals are thrown from its summit (but a few years since they were first trussed like a fowl); and I doubt if the event causes these calm Orientals to do more than glance up as the wretches come hurtling downward, or the numerous story-tellers to do more than raise their voices a little to recall the wandering attention of their audiences. Human life is nothing in the Orient; and when one reaches China one finds the condemned going to execution with a feeling more of curiosity than of fear, of which they seem utterly devoid. Barbarous tortures still exist in Bokhara. A criminal is beaten with sticks, stabbed with knives, has his eyelids cut off and eyes gouged out, is dragged at the tails of horses, and finally either tossed from this great minaret or quartered and then thrown to the dogs.

Speaking of the waters in these ancient cisterns, Anthony Jenkenson wrote three centuries ago as follows: "There is a little river running through the middle of the saide citie, but the water thereof is most unwholesome, for it breedeth sometimes in

men that drinke thereof, and especially in them that be not there born, a worme of an ell long, which lieth commonly in the legge betwixt the flesh and the skinne, and is pluckt out about the ancle with great art and cunning; the surgeons being much practiced therein, and if shee breake in plucking out, the partie dieth, and every day shee cometh out about an inche, which is rolled up, and so worketh until shee be all out."

The horrible things are sometimes two and three feet long, and look like vermicelli; so Curzon tells us. He also declares that "the most minute examination of the water under the microscope has never revealed the germ." He has a lot more to say on the subject, but it is certainly not a pleasant topic, so we will leave it.

Outside the gates of the city cluster the abodes of the dead,— thousands of oven-shaped mud tombs crowded one on top of the other. If the dead are so near the surface one need no more wonder that cholera — and of old the plague — is supposed to have its birth and eternal abiding-place here and in Samarkand.

The construction of mud walls and houses has reached perfection in Trans-Caspia. A photograph of Bokhara would impress one with the idea that it is surrounded with a massive, majestic stone wall. The towers, turrets, and high walls, thirty feet in some places, are all there, but are all composed of mud, built up by the spadeful. I watched the *modus operandi* to-day with considerable interest. When a wall is to be constructed water is conducted to the spot in ditches, earth is car-

ried there, and work commences. Several men below in the ditch stir up the mud and water and throw it into a pile above them. Then a man with a long-handled shovel gouges out a spadeful and passes it upward, where another "artist," receiving it in his hands, deposits it in its final resting-place. So the wall is built, shovelful by shovelful; and while the soil is damp, it is fashioned into towers and turrets, and sometimes ornamented in all sorts of fanciful designs. A wall will be six feet thick at the base and rise thirty feet to a width of six inches. The intense sun of summer hardens the work until it feels to the touch like stone, and in this dry air is almost as enduring.

All the ancient forts were built of such materials, and the Amir's palace of to-day, a very large structure, is entirely composed thereof. His Highness was away on a visit, but through the kindness of Mr. L—— the palace was thrown open for our inspection. It consisted of the usual number of courts, arcades, Turkish bathrooms, and numerous small rooms, all decorated in the gay taste of the Sarts of to-day, who seem to me to have entirely lost the taste and talent that produced such peerless structures as the Taj Mahal, the Delhi Mosque, the Alhambra, and the beautiful Medressés of Samarkand. The same holds true of the modern architecture in India. Bokhara carpets of rare quality and great value were tossed here and there, while some absurd French glass, a brass chandelier, or some cheap English furniture, were kept carefully covered and only exposed for our admiration.

Passing finally into one of the arcades, an attendant

in gorgeous robes and a magnificent turban waved us toward a table set for ten or twelve persons, and covered with fifteen different kinds of various-coloured sugars, in balls and squares, cones and triangles; a plate of cherries and apricots occupied the centre, and was flanked by some stale English biscuits. We scarcely knew what to do. F—— took one end of the festive board and I the other; Casimir, our guide, coolly seated himself in the centre and patronised both of us and every one else, while around about us stood some fifteen or twenty gorgeously costumed figures. Were they servants or guests? We wished to do the correct thing, but if we blundered it would be worse than a crime: so, being in doubt, we did nothing. I tried to swallow some of the stuff, and choked in the effort. On recovering, I found that tea had been placed in front of me, and one of the magnificents had seated himself at some little distance from the table, and commenced a confab through Casimir. So we offered him some of his own tea, and passed a pleasant half-hour, sampling everything in sight, and are laid up to-night in consequence. On our departure it was necessary to fee some of those men, but which one? From the twinkling eyes we knew all would accept it; so, laying five roubles on the table, we adjourned to the garden. F—— begged leave to photograph our apparent host, who we discovered afterward was head policeman—probably put there to see that we did not make off with a room or two. There was little else in sight. Consent was given with great dignity; and during the operation I heard a scuffle in the room where we

had left the five roubles. It was too expressive to need explanation. While the photographing was in progress, the gardener came up and presented me with a bunch of yellow flowers surrounded by—of all things in the world!—a lot of mint. I gave him a rouble, and horrified him by immediately eating his gift. His solemn Eastern eyes could not see the long vista of mint juleps that his gift recalled to my memory. On our way out, numerous guards presented arms, which we acknowledged with the utmost gravity, having by this time become fully convinced of our own magnificence.

We had been invited by Mr. L——, the political agent, to dine with him at seven. In view of our intended departure at ten, he waived ceremony, and told us to come in our travelling clothes. He lives in a spacious mansion near the station, one of those spreading, one-story houses so common in this land, and aforetime in Russia. I cannot understand why the Russians so dread fresh air. When we called at his house in the morning, the outer air was fresh and delightful, but it was rigorously excluded from the house by double windows. Within it was simply stifling, and we returned in the evening with the dread of a dinner in such an atmosphere, but, on arrival, were conducted by our host to a side terrace, and there found the table. Prince G—— and wife shortly joined the party, and we passed a charming two hours and had an excellent dinner. You must live on the stuff provided on the trains and at the cafés in Trans-Caspia to appreciate what that meant to us. When we finally bowed ourselves out, it was with a better feeling

toward things Asian, and with us went pleasant memories of our genial host and his delightful home. Life here would be almost imprisonment to one accustomed to the great world, yet Mr. L——, a bachelor, will pass most of his where we left him.[1] Separated from Europe by two seas, by two great chains of mountains, and by that awful desert; walled in by Siberia on the north, with the Celestial Empire to the eastward, and the untrodden solitudes of the Himalayas on the south, what spot on earth can be more isolated? True, Europe can be reached in ten days, but when the cholera comes in, that avenue is closed for months, and the cholera does come in almost every year. I think one year of life here would drive me to face a journey through the inferno, if the exit to the great "beyond" lay that way. By eleven our train has managed to get under way, and we settle ourselves to rest; but what with the dust and heat and the natives who wander in to look us over, we do not sleep much and are consequently very weary through the dragging hours of night. However, as morning breaks cool winds bring us life once more. Over a vast ocean of waving green, miles off on a gentle elevation, rise some golden arches and stately minarets, backed by a gigantic range of snow-clad mountains,—"Samarkand the Beautiful." After the arid heat of the desert, with its dust and glare, we gaze in wonder, fearing to close our eyes for an instant, lest the vision vanish and give place to the endless waves of shifting sand or the vast expanse of the steppes of Siberia.

[1] I think that he is now in Peking (1904).



CHAPTER XXVI

SAMARKAND

"Look around thee now on Samarkand!—
Is she not queen of earth? her pride
Above all cities? in her hand
Their destinies? in all beside
Of glory which the world hath known
Stands she not nobly and alone?
Falling—her veriest stepping-stone
Shall form the pedestal of a throne.
And who her sovereign? Timour—he
Whom the astonished people saw
Striding o'er empires haughtily,
A diadem'd outlaw!"

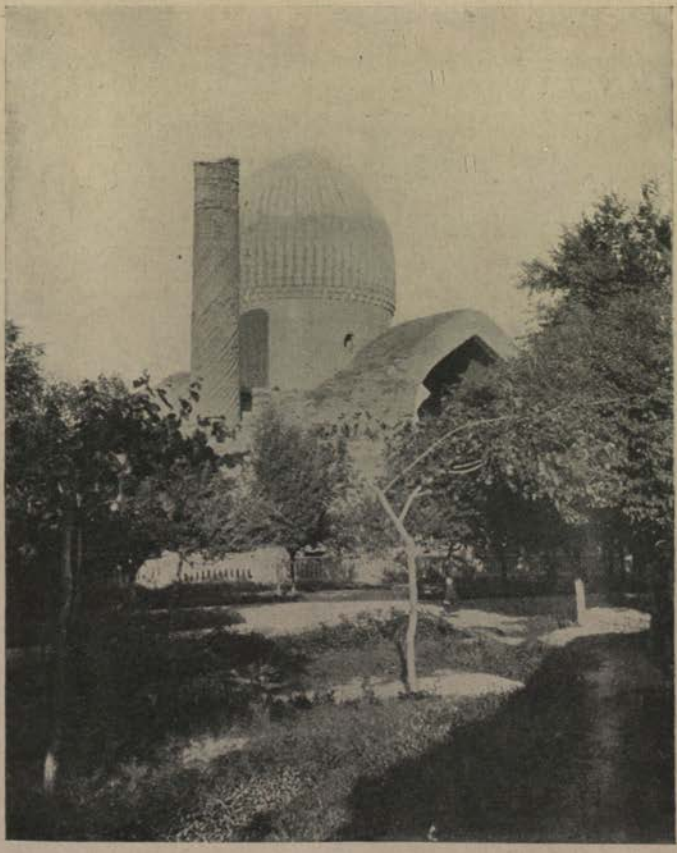
"For one touch of her hand,
I would give Bok, I would give Samarkand."

SAMARKAND, May, 1902.

I AM asked from home whether that last is mere poetic license, and whether Samarkand is not one of those places that anybody would give away.

Deeply embowered in the groves in the valley of the Zarafshan (strewer of gold) stands the poetic city of Samarkand — the home of Tamerlane, the home of all the romance and poetry in the East; where the delicious grapes and figs, peaches, pomegranates, plums, apples, almonds, and apricots grow,

and dainty white mulberries tumble over the garden walls or drop on one's tea-table out by the rushing brooks, always to be found in her gardens. Samarkand is supposed to have been founded by a mythical hero, "Aforsiah," but it shone brilliantly forth as Marcanda, when it was conquered by Alexander the Great, during whose time it was large and flourishing, but of that period no traces now remain, save some coins and medals bearing the effigies of Demetrius and others. After the Greeks came the wild tribes from the Siberian steppes. They were followed by the Arabs, who introduced Mohammedanism in 710, and all were swept away by the Mongol Jenghis Khan in 1221. The Persians claim that he completely destroyed the city, but it was in existence the year after. Though there are no traces of Christianity in the ancient town, that religion flourished there about 1246 and for centuries after, and was protected by the Mongol captor. Tamerlane overthrew the Mongols and of his time and reign the city of to-day holds many monuments and relics. Some say that she vies in antiquity with ancient Egypt. Be that as it may, she stands peerless in this heart of Central Asia, and all through the blessing of the waters of the Zarafshan—true gold, verily, in this land of the sun. Forty-three great canals, whose combined length is over six hundred miles, flow from that river in a network over all the land, and from these a thousand branches complete a perfect system of irrigation. But around the smiling valley spreads for ever the desert; to the south and west, that of the Black Sands; to the north and east, the "Famished Steppes," over which



MOSQUE, TAMERLANE

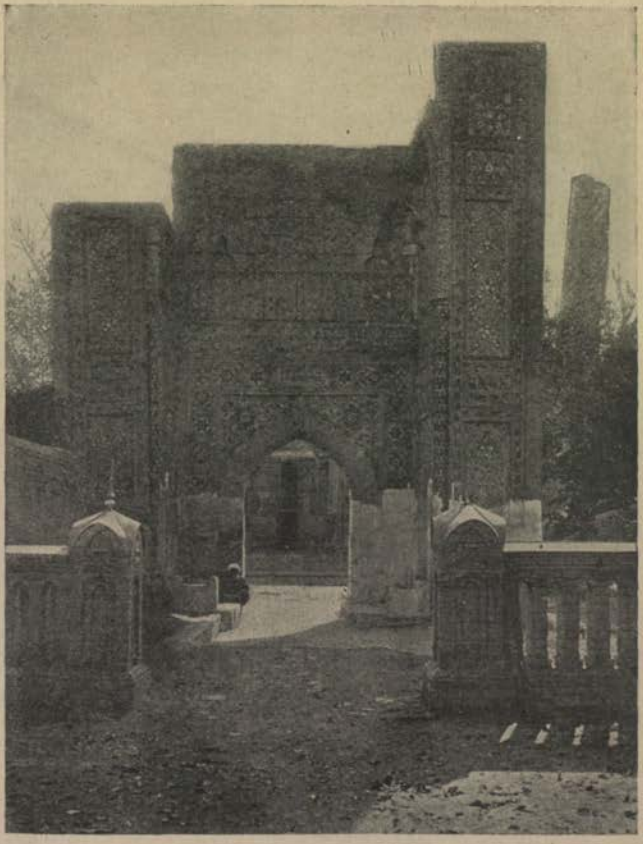
the hordes of Siberia and China have so often descended upon this Eden of the West; and if at any point the system of irrigation fails, then, like the shadow of death, the desert creeps slowly over the valley, soon suffocating and smothering all the beauty in its terrible embrace. Indeed, the very Zarafshan itself has no outlet, its diminished waters being seized and sucked under by the pitiless sands before they can reach the Oxus.[1] It is claimed that its waters are steadily diminishing, and, in consequence, that the oasis of Bokhara grows smaller and smaller each year, which, if it goes on, means destruction; but the traveller of to-day sees not the "handwriting on the wall."

Samarkand holds forty-two thousand inhabitants, but when Schuyler visited here in 1873 the Russian town scarcely existed, and was certainly not a place of beauty. To-day it is like a frame of green and gold, surrounding, apparently, the brilliant Oriental picture of the ancient city. As one enters the town, one catches sight of the governor's pleasant home on one side, with the blue and gold domes of the Russian church just beyond it, while in the distance broken arches and a wild jumble of leaning towers show where the ancient city stands.

Strangers are so few and far between in this remote Eastern city that we are the objects of greater attention than heretofore. They always arrive by the through train from Krasnovodsk, and are looked for when that train comes in, which it does three times a week. We, having stopped at Bokhara, rather than remain there another night,

[1] The Amu Daria, the ancient Oxus.

took a slow train, and reached here all unexpected, to the utter upsetting of the many officials. Visiting cards possess immense importance in the eyes of these Eastern officials; and just here I present mine. They can't read one word thereon, but they see several names, and each one must mean a title or denote high office. If they make a mistake and bother some one in position, they know they will lose their official heads. Sailing serenely on, we enter a droshky, leaving them standing in a row, bowing deeply, the one who holds the card being accorded the position of honour in the centre. Still they are not sure and are watching us as we drive off down a vast avenue of waving poplars, an avenue of great width, bordered by quadruple rows of fine trees, under whose branches the waters go singing along and which leads us for three miles straight away, before the Russian town is reached and we stretch our tired bodies under the cherry trees of Madame Metzler's delightful little hotel. Low and white and cool, it rambles all over a garden full of white mulberry and plum trees, apple and pear trees; the brooks from the street wander in and around as though on a tour of inspection. Madame is French, and for a time we forget, in her dainty French dishes, that we are surrounded by that mass of grease, called Russian food, and must partake of much of it before we return here. The officials have transferred their vigilance to this house, and we watch them lazily as they stand around its portals. All changes, however, with the arrival of another "white-cap," who, returning our passports with deep salaams, informs us that we can go where



GATEWAY OF MOSQUE, TAMERLANE

we please, do what we please, and remain as long as we desire, and that the governor, Count Rostofcheff, will be happy to receive us. Those other "white-caps" vanish as though the earth had swallowed them, and we pass out into the broad avenues of Samarkand on our visit to her governor. Water is the gold of the Zarafshan. It rushes in brooks or slumbers in lakes all over this Eastern city; every street has its murmuring streams, every courtyard its quiet pond, and the trees nod and bend towards the giver of life as though to make the most of its sojourn, which would be but short, and the life-destroying desert waiting only for its departure to spread a mantle of death over life. "Government House" faces the Abrahamsky Boulevard. Like all other houses of the city, it is but one story in height, earthquakes being too numerous to render higher structures safe. Back of it stretches a park that would not discredit an ancestral home in England, and in the door of a "kibitka," one of those great tents of the Kirghiz, a high structure of bamboo, covered by heavy skins, and comfortable for all weathers, we find Count Rostofcheff. He is dressed in the usual uniform, white coat and cap, with dark blue trousers, a man, I should say, of some sixty years of age; tall and fine-looking, with deep grey eyes and a flowing white beard. He seems to be perfectly at home in half a dozen languages, and he is the only person that I have met with in all Turkestan who speaks English. Occasionally one finds a little French or German, but generally nothing save Russian, a language which we at home are in the habit of regarding as of small importance and no use; but when I

find myself in the midst of a nation of 140,000,000 of people with whom it is the medium of communication I cannot but regret that, at least, its rudiments were not taught me with my French and German. We spend a pleasant hour with Count Rostofcheff on the veranda of the mansion, which a late earthquake has caused to separate several inches from the house, and the next will bring it down. The Governor was married shortly after our departure, and I could not but regret that the gracious lady whom I saw on my return had not been there on our way east. There were no other people of distinction upon whom it was necessary to call, and so we were able to start at once on our inspection of the city.

Russian Samarkand is charming, and doubly so to our eyes and bodies after the weary days just passed. All of its streets are broad avenues, bordered by four rows, on both sides, of silver-leaf and Lombardy poplars. Down both sides of every causeway running brooks go singing along. Masses of snowy catalpa blossoms shower upon us as we pass, cherries and mulberries drop over the neighbouring walls, the air sweeps down from the mountains pure and delightful, and life takes a new lease. The peace and quiet of the whole place is most delightful. As I walked to the post-office this morning, I caught sight in the distance of some domes and minarets; but that is all, so far, of the Samarkand of Tamerlane. We shall explore farther to-morrow.

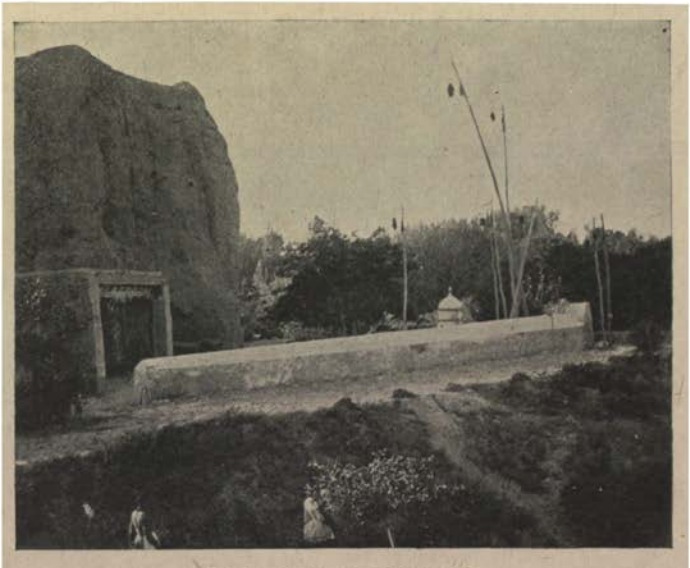
How the memories of childhood cling to one, and how strange to be reminded of one of those memories off here in Samarkand! As I rest for a moment

on a bench by a running brook, away in front of me stretches a vista of sunny street. Down it comes a drove of cattle and some sheep, and behind them a picturesque boy blowing a horn. The beasts seem to understand and obey its sounds.

> Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn;
> The sheep in the meadow, the cows in the corn.

Many a time, as a boy, I have wondered what old Mother Goose meant by that. "We never blew horns for sheep and cows." I must reach Samarkand, must leave youth behind me, before the explanation comes. Did Mother Goose, I wonder, find her rhymes and melodies amongst these Far-Eastern tribes? Did she ever come to Samarkand? How old everything is! I have also discovered the abiding-place of "Balaam's ass." It is in the adjoining lot. Balaam did not possess one ass, but a lot of them; and they lift up their voices in constant lamentations, coming often to my bedroom window to pour them into my sympathetic ear, a confidence that is not fully appreciated at 3 A.M. I have no recollection of any such conduct on the part of their sedate and dignified brethren in Egypt or Persia; but here patience has ceased to be a virtue, and the mourning is incessant. "Oh, my brother from that far western land, where even a little ass like me has some chance to sleep in quiet, blame me not, I beseech you, that I weep. You have seen how dignified and self-contained my brethren are in Egypt; but there we never carry more than two of the heathens at the most, whereas here, you see, it is

always three, and sometimes four. Therefore I weep and will not be comforted." And so it is. One little patient donkey will come plodding along, carrying three balloon-like figures in gorgeous robes and towering turbans, all of most brilliant colours, nothing to be seen of the beast save the tip of the



TOMB OF DANIEL, SAMARKAND

tail and the points of his ears, until one almost fancies that the figures on his back have consolidated their six legs into four for greater accommodation and speed.

In such company we pass out on the way to our prophet Daniel's tomb (how it came to be here I know not), and all the route is lined with begging lepers. I did not know that they were such, and

wondered why, when we alighted, they did not crowd around us for alms. They showed no signs of that terrible scourge, and it was not until our return to the city that I realised with what the hideous object approaching me on a donkey was afflicted. I had seen many at other Eastern points, but none so horrible as this. It, for I do not know whether it was a man or woman, did not look like a human being. With a river near by I should certainly put a period to my existence if I were so accursed. Farther on I meet one, evidently a young man, crouching under the desolate branches of a dusty tree and close by a stagnant pool; near him is a ragged bundle and a staff, and as I pass by on the other side he looks up and draws his mantle across his face; but his eyes hold mine for an instant—eyes full of a hunted, haunted, awful expression. Staggering to his feet he moves off down the hillside past a fountain—where some women shrink away from him—and onward through the dust and glare and heat of the day until he becomes a mere black spot in the desert beyond, and then disappears for ever.

Depart—and when
Thy heart is heavy and thine eyes are dim,
Lift up thy prayers beseechingly to him
Who, from the tribes of men,
Selected thee to feel his chastening rod.
Depart! O leper! and forget not God!

As for Daniel's tomb, it is an Arab-like structure, with a raised pole at one end, and is some twenty-five yards in length. He is said—here—to have been a hundred yards long when first interred, but

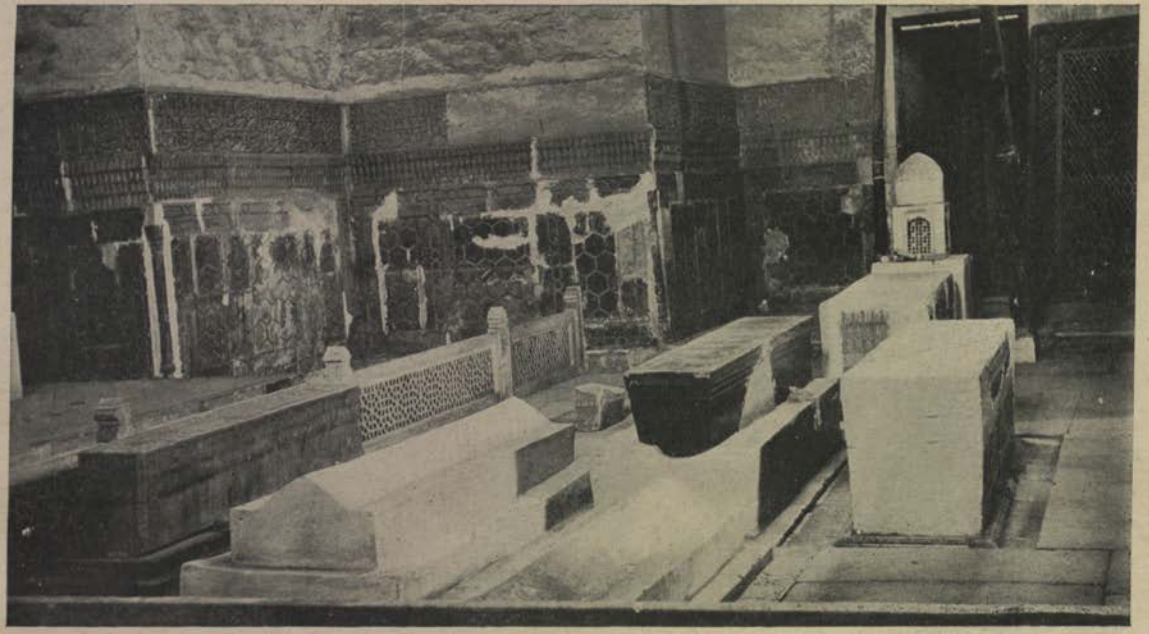
has shrunken to twenty-five. At that rate he will be, ere many more centuries pass over him, on the minus side as to stature; still, twenty-five yards even in our progressive days cannot be called undersized, and at this slow rate of shrinkage he will still be of good height long years after we have passed



ENTRANCE TO TOMB OF TAMERLANE

away into nothingness. Now, his resting-place is much affected by Sarts who desire to take tea in the country, and a samovar is steaming away just over his head.

These Sarts are a race that seems a cross between the Turk and the Parsis; with the dress and religion of the former, they possess the clear-cut features and grand eyes of the latter, and they are, I am



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told, much like them and the Jews in the matter of barter and sale.

You will approach the tomb of Tamerlane through a Gothic arch, which acts as a gateway to the inclosure, where it stands, and you will pause a moment to talk to the old man who lives there and who will sell you copies of the sacred inscriptions. As is the case with all these Mohammedan mausoleums, the tombs under the main dome are but monuments, so to speak. Here, you will descend to the dark, arched chamber just below to find the real resting-place of this Eastern conqueror.

Marked by a small black marble tomb, covered with inscriptions, here he sleeps surrounded by his wives, his children, and his teachers. A bright blue porcelain dome that one sees rising from the midst of a clump of trees soars above the mausoleum. Water gushes around the shrine and the place is cool and fresh — in marked contrast to most Eastern tombs, where the dust is generally thick enough to hide all beauty. Tamerlane owes the beauty of his resting-place to the Russians, who have converted this spot in fifteen years from a dusty, arid place to a charming oasis.

In the old city there is what I have never seen in Oriental towns before — until reaching Teheran, where it is not nearly so imposing—a great square, and I know of no more picturesque spot in the East. Three stately buildings, called "Medressés," or universities, rise around it, a picturesque jumble of domes, alcoves, and fretted gateways, all covered with porcelain tiling of turquoise blue and dark blue on a ground of yellow, while minarets out of the

perpendicular complete the fantastic effect. The square is the great mart of the city, and the crowds ebb and flow and sway hither and thither like the waves of the sea.

Our West has not as yet affected these Eastern peoples in their love of colour, and, save in Tunis, I have never seen such gorgeousness. Here comes an old man—on the inevitable donkey—wrapped in a garment of heavy crimson, brocaded with flaring yellow figures, while from his head rises a turban of green and gold that would make a Western man totter, but he sits erect. The heels of his pointed red slippers are pressed closely into the little beast that carries him forward with a steady trot. Yonder a group of turbaned merchants are closely inspecting a consignment from China by the great caravan routes. The patient camels that have toiled for so many months under its weight are asleep beneath the trees. Veiled women pass chattering along on patient donkeys. Sedate-looking storks gaze down upon us from their ancestral nests high on the leaning minarets. It is the Orient pure and simple, and, so far, unpolluted by the tourist element.

I was much disappointed at Bokhara in the display of rugs and carpets. We can see better specimens any day at home or in Europe from the same market, and I fancy that the fine products are reserved for export and the prices that are obtained thereby. We saw none of that peculiar pattern so familiar to us all as "Bokhara carpets." I am told that they are made in the outlying towns of the province. There were none even in the Amir's palace.

So the days pass in Samarkand. The Russians

are very polite to people they once admit to these countries. General —— sent an officer here this afternoon to act as a guide for us wherever we might desire to go, and we desire to go everywhere. Backed by the power of the Czar, we broke down



VEILED WOMAN, SAMARKAND

such doors as refused to open to our knock, but this was, however, not necessary save at an old mosque or so, where the custodian, contrary to orders, had gone off and locked up the towers. One always marvels at the continual locking up, by these people, of places that contain absolutely nothing one could carry away. A rude stone stairway is as

religiously guarded as though it led to untold treasures. We particularly desired to ascend to some point from which we could secure good views of the Medressés, of which I have spoken before. After breaking open several doors and ascending numerous dusty stairways, we reached the roof of one of them, which commanded a good view of the others, and from which we also had a glimpse of the city. Just below spread the square, humming with Oriental life, and surrounded by the Medressés, with their domes, arches, and minarets, around which thousands of birds circled in the evening air. The setting sun lit up the rich blues of the buildings, and tinted even the mud city of the Sarts with a rosy glow. Away to the south rose the dome over Tamerlane's tomb, and behind the snow mountains closed the prospect, while all around spread the waving trees of the Russian city, and the air blew fresh and sweet, full of the odour of the catalpa. Not far to the north rose the ruins of the great mosque, the only building destroyed when Russia captured the town. It was built by the wife of Tamerlane, who never entirely finished it, and is more picturesque in its ruin than it could have been in its more perfect state. I notice that these holy houses of the prophet, as well as those of the universities, are nearly all done in the three colours, turquoise blue and dark blue on a yellow ground. Also, that there is not the usual jumble of sacred texts thrown here, there, and everywhere, but simply now and then a panel or band of them, while the other decorations are geometrical in design,—the Trojan, and many of those patterns so familiar to

one on the canvas-work done at home, but all in the three colours mentioned. The domes are always turquoise blue porcelain, surmounted by a golden crescent. All this shows that the ancient Sarts had better taste than most of the Orientals. These effects are charming, and one cannot but think that, were Constantinople decorated in such a manner, it



GREAT SQUARE, SAMARKAND

would be much more beautiful, whereas now one is somewhat disappointed at the dulness of the first view of that city from the Golden Horn.

Passing through the fantastic façade of the Medressés (shown in the illustration), we entered a vast inclosed square, surrounded by small chambers, with platforms before each of them. Those were the schoolrooms, and in several we found groups

of teachers and scholars deep in the study of the Koran. In the centre of the square stood one of those stone structures, like an open book, used of old to support some ancient copy of the prophet's writings, most of which are now in the museums of Russia.



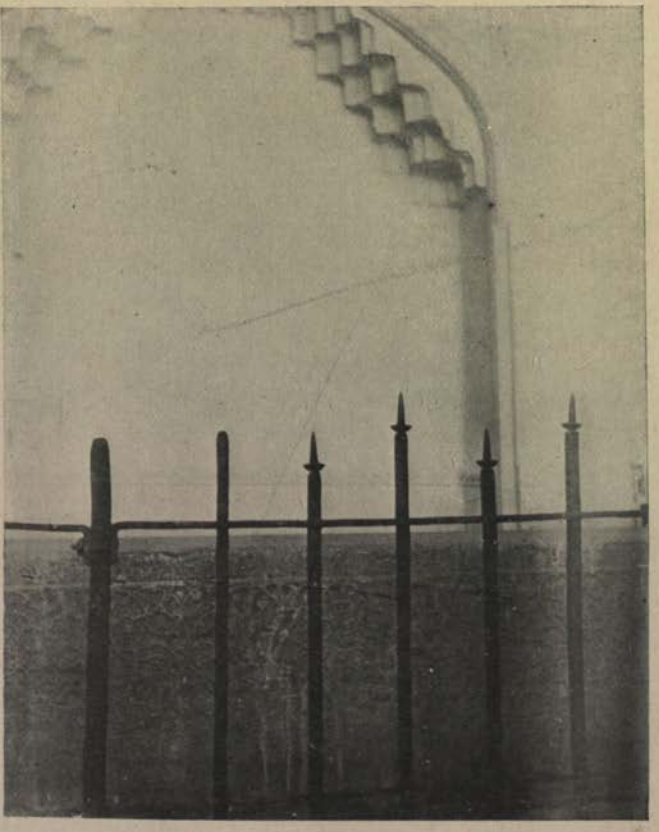


CHAPTER XXVII

THE KOK TASH

WE have visited the celebrated "Kok Tash" (blue stone), about which some have written, but which so few, I venture to say, have ever seen. I know of one writer who plainly gives himself away by describing it as "blue." It is, on the contrary, a yellowish-grey, with nothing blue about it. In size, it must be about ten by four feet, and some two feet thick, with the front covered with arabesques. It stands, where it has always stood, on a platform under a pagoda, the pagoda having been for the past twenty-two years inclosed in a Russian fort, only to be entered by special permission. We had such, and were also escorted by an officer; so we not only entered, but were allowed to photograph the stone, though I fear the light was not favourable. It is said that, in the days before Tamerlane, a bright blue stone surmounted this, and on that was placed the throne chair. I doubt that, however, as chairs are not an Oriental article and were unknown. There was more probably a cushion or pile of them. The Chinese lay claim to the Kok Tash, and so does Bokhara; but Russia says that it must remain here, and I am under the impression

she will have her way about it. Schuyler tells us that "it has been common to speak of this stone as a blue or green stone, the word *kok* usually meaning one of those colours, and Lehmann (if it be not a remark of the editor) in his travels speaks of the stone as being of *lapis lazuli*, evidently from hearsay. *Kok*, however, is an indeterminate word for colour, and even means grey, as in the sport of *kok-büra*, 'grey wolf.' The term might thus be applicable to marble. It is probable that the name of this stone had another origin. Baber speaks of the palace which Timur (Tamerlane) constructed in the citadel of Samarkand as being stately, and four stories high, and famous by the name of *kok-sarai*, just as the palace of Timur in Kesh was called *ak-sarai*, or 'white palace.' The *kok-sarai*, Baber says, 'is remarkable on this account: that every prince of the race of Timur who is elevated to the throne, mounts it at this place, and so one who loses his life for aspiring to the throne loses it here. Insomuch that this has passed into a common expression: that such a prince has been condemned to the *kok-sarai*, is a hint which is perfectly well understood to mean that he has been put to death.' The *kok-tash*, we are told, served as the foundations for the throne of Timur, and probably received its name from being the famous stone which was in the *kok-sarai*. The elevation of the sovereign on the *kok-tash* passed into a custom, and a legend arose that the stone had fallen from heaven, and would not allow a false Khan, or one not of genuine descent, to approach it; and as late as 1722, in the rebellion against Abul Feiz Khan, the complaint was made



THE KOK TASH, ANCIENT THRONE OF SAMARKAND

that he had never fulfilled the formality of sitting on the *kok-tash*, and the rebels proclaimed in his place Rejen Khan, who was consecrated in the usual manner."

For our five-hundred-miles' journey to Osh we have purchased a very good tarantass—"good" as those vehicles go. Long and low, with neither seats nor springs, it does not look very enticing; but it is all that the land affords. It is strongly built, and we trust may resist the jolting and pulling from three horses abreast that it is soon to receive. We shall sleep in it all the way, and when our journey is over, sell the thing for twenty roubles or less. It cost eighty. I beg that you who think that a journey across our land is a bother, will come here. If this tour through Asia does not hasten the whitening of your hair, I shall be surprised; and the bleaching will come all the sooner from the fact that all the annoyance and bother is, to your thinking, so utterly senseless, from that caused by those in high authority to the boots which you are forced to kick as a relief to your feelings, though not from any notion that it will let light in upon his blackness of intellect. However, the day will soon dawn upon you in which you will surrender your ideas of how things should be done and adopt those of these people who have been at the work for some years to say the least; then you will cease to worry.

What changes have occurred since the great traveller, Vamberg, penetrated to Central Asia! Through dangers by fire and flood, and from man and beast, he worked his slow way from Teheran north to Khiva, then over the desert to Bokhara

and Samarkand, and thence south-westwardly to Herat, and again to Teheran. It took him seven months to reach this smiling city of Samarkand. Farther he dared not go, though he greatly desired to see Kokand, which was reputed — without an atom of truth—to be more beautiful than Samarkand. So with great regret he turned backwards, being forced to leave in secrecy for fear of the treacherous khan. To-day, 1904, slow though it be, our progress is as lightning when compared to his.

Sixty-four hours by rail brings us from the Caspian Sea to Andijan, some eighty miles east of his point of great desire,—Kokand. In '95 one occupied a week from Samarkand to that point. Truly there are no remote portions of this globe left—every point is just next door, as it were. Especially in Asia is this being demonstrated—by Russia — more and more each year. Not by her *armies* is she conquering that continent. Her great pawn in the game is not a *cannon*, but a *locomotive*. England has found it so in India, America has found it so on her great plains, and will find it so in the Philippines.



RUSSIA'S MOVE



CHAPTER XXVIII

"SHAH ZINDEH" AND DEPARTURE FROM SAMARKAND

"All that tread the earth are but a handful to the tribes that slumber in its bosom."

OUT past the valley of the lepers, and running far up the side of a dusty hill, rises the famous tomb and mosque combined, called "Shah Zindeh." Early in Mussulman days, Kasim Ibu Abbas came to Samarkand and preached the Koran, until here one day he was killed by some enemy—decapitated, so the story runs; but that was a small matter to so holy a man. Seizing his head, he leaped into a well, where he abides unto this day. He was expected out to assist in repulsing the Russians in 1868, but did not come; therefore the belief that there is a greater foe than Russia, for whom he waits and watches. As we enter the portal of the mosque, grave-faced Sarts arise and salute us. Very stately men, and possessed, I fancy, of great wisdom. One of them advances and offers to show us the Holy of Holies. The mosque consists of a long flight of steps, leading upward into dense shadows. On either side, as we mount, we notice alcoves and

niches devoted to prayer, and far up we enter the shrine—which covers the well and tomb—empty, as are all such places, save for a few rugs and an immense and splendid Koran. Underneath and around are inner cells and rooms, to which the daylight and warmth never enter, and where the air is deathly with its terrible chill. It penetrates to our very marrow, and drives us forth shortly to the sun-



MOSQUE OF SHAH ZINDEH

light and life above. The old Sart is devout, but not too much so to accept our money; and leaving him, we pass outward onto the surrounding hills—graveyards, all of them. Thousand of tombs thickly covering the yellow earth as far as the eye can reach, and such lonely, dilapidated tombs, over which the yellow dust blows in clouds! Some skulking dogs —or are they jackals?—skurry away as we appear, and our advent causes a flock of vultures to rise from

a newly made grave and slowly float away in the still air. A more silently desolate spot I have never seen.

On our return, we stop to inspect the great mosque, built by the favourite wife of Tamerlane, Bibi Khanyan, daughter of the Emperor of China—a vast jumble of gigantic and ruined walls and arches, so ruinous that it can no longer be used by the faithful in prayer. Here she was buried, and here, protected by a huge serpent, she is said to exist to this very day. Certain it is, that when her tomb was violated by those who could not conceive what use a dead woman had with such vast stores of jewels, this serpent waited until the robbers were laden with the precious things, and then slew the whole band. There they were found next day, and none could be induced to restore the jewels, until one old man entered and performed the sacred work; but when he would have come forth, swiftly fell the stone portal and fastened him down for ever. The devotion of the serpent was because of the kindness it had received from the Empress during her life. Perhaps, however, it was simply a small act of atonement toward the human race from the descendants of that other serpent in another Eastern garden famous in history. The legends in these Eastern cities remain unchanged and unchangeable and are told to the traveller of to-day as they were told to Schuyler in '73, and to all those who came before him to this beautiful city of Samarkand.

This seems a day of graves, but up to this present moment they have all been such old, old graves that they have excited no feeling save curiosity. Now,

however, it is to be somewhat different. As I reach the hotel, I meet Madame Metzler and a "friend" coming out, and am invited by Madame to go with them to the Russian graveyard—why not?—so I accept and am shortly following that worthy creature through the paths of one of those hideous "Gottes Ackers" only to be found amongst those of the Romish or Greek faiths, a vast jumble of crazy iron crosses burdened with wreaths of immortelles. Madame bears a watering-pot and a rake and comes to give the sleeping "Monsieur" his weekly cleaning-up. The air of Turkestan did not agree with "Monsieur," and he soon passed to his rest, and was, so the "friend" tells me, "buried while he was *'ot*." The friend acquired his knowledge of our tongue down near the Tower of London, where h's are considered superfluous—indeed, quite a matter of affectation.

While Madame rakes and waters, the "friend" takes me to the wall of the sacred inclosure, beyond which the hills fall suddenly away and then rise again in billowy waves, bearing on their crests the fantastic Eastern city, and rolling onward until they break against the base of the mighty mountains. It is not, however, this panorama that I am called to inspect, but some thousands of mounds just before me and without the wall; many are well cared for, but most are sunken and fallen in, while here and there a crazy, tipsy-looking, wooden cross makes it all only the more hideous—"cholera." Each and all of the thousands there have bowed before that terrible spectre whose shadow seems to hover for ever over this fair valley of the Zarafshan.



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RUINS OF THE GREAT MOSQUE, SAMARKAND

Russia is endeavouring to destroy Samarkand's reputation as being the birth- and eternal abiding-place of the scourge. She insists that the cisterns, which are the great source of that terrible disease, shall be cleaned every few years, instead of once in three hundred years.

Our stay in Samarkand draws to a close, and I can not depart without a word more for Madame Metzler and her very comfortable hotel of the same name. Madame is French, as I have remarked, and has brought to this oasis in the desert many of those charming French ways that one remembers in the little hotel at Blois, where the pet magpie had no tail. You know the place? The Madame there had a daughter; the Madame here has none, and so we are in a measure all her children. We are served with recollections of Paris, both in food and otherwise, out under the bower of trees, where cherries nod over us and white mulberries drop on our plates. Occasionally a pet hen comes clucking around, followed by her brood of chicks; often she mounts a chair, and from thence to the table, to see that we are not more favoured than herself. We are not, for she roosts in Madame's room; while, I assure you, we have a suite of apartments at the other end of the house, which spreads in a rambling sort of a way, here, there, and everywhere all over the garden, inclosed by its high walls. My windows open on to the street, and as they stand wide open day and night, I am often awakened by beggars, and sometimes by a stray donkey, who thrusts his head therein. It is, perhaps, useless to say that I am awakened by the latter, if he speaks at all. Not-

withstanding this Eden, I have not at all times been good-humoured. Confession is good for the soul. Last night, as on many nights before, the soda water, which one must drink, was bad, and I told Madame so plainly. Madame was very *désolée*, but that did not help the soda. Still, I have no doubt that, on many a hot day in the farther mountains, we shall look back to Madame and her hotel with longing and regret, as on many days in the many months of the years to come we shall remember it and her with pleasure.

The traveller of to-day will undoubtedly go eastward from Samarkand by the railway, which has been completed to Andijan, with a branch from Jizak to Tashkend, but I venture on the privilege of taking my readers some hundreds of miles in that fast-vanishing machine of torture,—the tarantass. They will be vastly shaken up and sore when they return here, but they will understand what travel means in this eastern land and will see much of the country and spy out the ways of the people as they could not do from a train. So come, if you will; our tarantass awaits and we must be off for Tashkend, by way of the gorges, through which the hordes of Jenghis Khan and Tamerlane poured into the valley of the Zarafshan.



CHAPTER XXIX

BY TARANTASS TO TASHKENDT

DID I say something in my notes of yesterday about a touching farewell to Samarkand, to Madame mine hostess, to the native baby, to the unnatural cats in the courtyard? Did I not announce that, by that hour of the next day, we would be far away? If so, I entirely forgot that we were still within the Russian possessions. I entirely failed to understand Madame's peculiar smile, or the fact that at midnight she had failed to present her account; only smiling a little more broadly and shrugging her shoulders upon hearing that we must tarry another day, because "there are no horses to be had for the tarantass." The mail moves to-day, and there are officers *en route* to Tashkendt; so we must wait until to-morrow. By paying in advance, we are comparatively sure that we will get horses—unless—unless——.

However, we started at last, with a merry jingle of bells and plunging of horses, and were certainly most uncomfortable until we had almost repacked the tarantass; and I fear we saw little of the endless gardens surrounding Samarkand, so busy were we. Things were no more than settled before we reached

the river, and were obliged to dump all, including ourselves, into a great two-wheeled cart, called an "arba," which is the only thing that will carry one dry-shod over the uncertain channels of the stream. And so we crossed the Zarafshan; not, however,



AN ARBA

without getting our provisions well soaked. F—— nearly fainted when he saw the bread bag sailing away down-stream.

The old mode of communication between Samarkand and Tashkendt,[1] which is the military capital here, was by tarantass, over very rough roads, where one must carry one's own food or starve. Absolutely nothing was obtainable save tea, and now and then

[1] "City of stone."

eggs, and those only at the post-stations, which were wretchedly dirty places. The tarantass is a cumbersome, box-like carriage, with a top like a victoria, and with no springs; in their place are long poles; but it is the only vehicle which can survive these roads. In it one stores all the rugs and mats one can find to brace oneself with. Strong men can stand the motion, but I felt the most intense pity for one poor woman who passed us. She was going to Moscow, and had her two little children with her. The heat and glare were intense, while clouds of dust rendered all things invisible. She looked and was, no doubt, intensely wretched, and I do not see how she endured it at all. I had expected a wretched night,—one must travel day and night, as there are no stopping-places,—but, much to my surprise, slept soundly and well. Hereafter we shall travel as much by night as possible. The air becomes cool and the dust is much less, while the night effects on the steppes of Asia are very weird and fantastic. The plain stretches away to the northward, absolutely flat; neither mound, nor bush, nor rock breaks the dead level. The skeleton of a camel becomes a prominent object, and great numbers of turtles cross the roadway in stately procession. The moon was at its full as we passed along last night, and ever and anon long trains of camels, inward bound from Thibet and China, were sharply silhouetted upon its disk. The place was one where wolves should abound, and it would not have surprised me to have heard their mournful cry break the dead silence at any moment.

The following day we crossed the Sira Daria.

That river seemed weary with the weight of mud with which its waters were laden, weary with the prospect of its long journey through the deserts. At 9 P.M. of our second day we reached Tashkendt, forty hours out, which is about as fast time as the journey (three hundred versts) can be done in. We were not delayed at all. Tashkendt's streets, in the Russian town, are very wide, and are bordered by many rows of trees. One can see even in the moonlight that her mansions are more pretentious than those of Samarkand, but the brooks do not go singing along as in the city of Tamerlane.

She is a city of 156,000 inhabitants and is much like Samarkand,—the Russian portion, I mean,—but on an enlarged scale. As its elevation is not so great, it does not possess that degree of freshness so delightful in the smaller city, nor does it hold in its Sart town any such objects of interest. Extensive bazaars abound, much like all other bazaars that one sees, which become very monotonous in the long run. Nature meant all this for a desert, and a desert it was until the Russians, by their extensive irrigations, converted it into a bower; but withal you see that it is a bower perforce, and would much rather return to its primitive condition. It remains as it now is under protest, and were Russia to relax her work for one year, desolation and blight would settle over all, its river being small and with no such volume of water as the Zarafshan.

I have observed that among the native cafés there is much greater cleanliness than in Egypt or Turkey. Rich rugs cover clean floors, and the attendants appear to have washed during the present century.

Still, one is never tempted to eat or drink what they offer. Pass them at night, and you will see an Asiatic "Yosha-warra"—numbers of girls strewn around everywhere; and I defy the most hardened *roué* to go there and not feel a blush of indignation as he sees little girls of ten years offered as tempting bait by their infamous masters. These Sarts are not a religious people; hence one misses that most characteristic feature of Oriental life—the Muezzin calling at all hours to prayer. "God is great" rarely echoes on the air here. No stately figures on gorgeous prayer-rugs bow and murmur in the direction of Mecca. Not only in this, but in many other points, there is much of the charm of the Orient wanting, or rather, it is an Orient with a charm peculiar to itself. It strikes me, however, that the upper classes are superior to those in Turkey and Egypt. Their features are cleaner-cut, the whole face is finer-looking, and I have met several to whom the title of gentleman could be applied. I do not remember any Turk upon whom I would be willing to bestow it.

Last night we dined with the Governor-General at Government House, or, rather, we dined outside the house, as the table was laid in the gardens, which have been cultivated to a high state around the one-storied, spreading mansion. One of the ladies spoke excellent English, affording me great pleasure, as, aside from F—— and Count Rostofcheff, I have not heard my own tongue spoken in weeks. You must know French when you visit this portion of the Far East, and even that language is of little use. You will hear it here, because of the presence

of the army, but in Samarkand there were but three persons who could speak it. So Russian, in Turkestan, you must use if you do not know Sart or Persian.

Tashkendt is the capital of Turkestan. The native city is to my thinking the most uninteresting city of all Central Asia. It possesses no buildings of interest or note and but one, a medressé, of any size, and which strikes one as poor indeed after having seen those of Samarkand. Tashkendt's houses are low, flat structures, generally of one story; her bazaars are dirty and uninteresting. The native bazaar in the Russian town is cleaner and better in every way and therein the traveller may find something to attract his attention, some fine rugs and tents at small cost. The native work in metal is so coarse and clumsy that it does not attract, though the shapes of the ewers are fantastic. If you would live here, you will find house rentals dearer than in St. Petersburg.

Foreign trade was heavy with Central Asia even twenty years ago, when it amounted annually to $15,000,000 of our money. It must be vastly more to-day, and when the railway is completed from Orenburg the increase will be more marked.

The city has schools supported by the Government, where a good common-school education can be obtained. Trades are also taught when the pupils pay half the expenses. There are several thousand children in these institutions. In the boys' preparatory school, children must be seven years of age and be clothed in the prescribed uniform. In the higher schools the tax is £3 a year, and in the lower £2.

Tashkendt possesses a library of ten thousand volumes, composed of books in all the European languages. America does not seem to have any trade with this part of Asia. I fancy Russia has been able to shut out that of most of the world save her own.

It has been stated that the success of Russia in this present war with Japan would mean the destruction of American trade with Manchuria. This can only be done by the imposition of a stiff tariff against us while the Russian merchants are allowed free entry; or by the differential rates on the Siberian Railway by which all merchandise, save that of Russia, would have to pay such high rates of freight that none save a Russian could penetrate the interior. If the ports remain open and the rates uniform, our commerce must increase enormously, especially as we are thousands of miles nearer those markets than is any other nation. Furthermore, we reach them by cheap sea transportation, whereas the long haul over the Siberian Railway will make the freight charges too heavy for any possible profit. We can never reach these Central Asian markets in any great degree, but we are already in Manchuria and our trade will undoubtedly increase enormously. During my visit to that country in 1902, I found American foodstuffs of all sorts—American canned goods, ploughs, reapers, and threshing machines on sale in the towns, and noted that the locomotives were mostly of American build and the rails of American manufacture. Not only did the country seem open to all the world, but in all the towns one noted business men of many nations, especially Germans.

It is also continually stated that the Russians are a dirty people while the Japs are cleanly. The Russian peasants certainly do not strike one as cleanly, but I have yet to see amongst them the sights which greet the eye in Japan. Leprosy does not seem rife amongst the Russians. You will find it amongst the Asiatic tribes under the dominion of the Czar, where the lepers are segregated, but I have never noted it amongst the Russians. But attend a religious feast or festival in Japan, and amongst the multitude you find there leprosy is strewn broadcast, and you flee away in terror. I am speaking now of the masses. As for cleanliness of person, the Japs and Russians both bathe, and the steaming bath of the latter is much the more thorough, after which they roll in the snow. Both Japs and Russians appear to believe in ancestral clothing, and many a time I have ordered my Jap guide off and away because I could not endure the stench from his greatly venerated and most ancient garments.

It is also constantly stated that the Japs are a moral and the Russians a most immoral race. The Russians are, to my thinking and from what I have observed, no more immoral than the other races of Europe and America. That vice is there, as it is with us, there is no doubt, but you have to look for it. It is never allowed to intrude upon you, as it does in some of the great cities of Western Europe. As for the Japs, morality, as we understand that word, is simply unknown. Vice in Japan is more dangerous than anywhere else in the world, for it is made most attractive. It is, so to speak, wreathed in cherry blossoms and decked in fancy lanterns.

It is here, there, and everywhere, and every visitor to that land goes through the streets of the celebrated "Yosha-warras," where vice in its most alluring form is for ever on exhibition, through the glass fronts of the houses. Such is not the case anywhere in Russia, where, as I have said, you must seek it out: it is not permitted to flaunt in the open air. As for the "brutality of the Russians," I have seen no evidence of it. On the contrary, I have never seen a Russian soldier or policeman do other than shake the man he had in charge. This Empire has and is settling her new possessions in a very peaceful fashion. Her soldiers are also her workmen. They build her railroads and her towns. Her vast army of railway guards and post-house keepers are her settlers. They come to stay; they are all married and have hordes of children, no matter how poor their station. They get to a place, they live there, they bury their dead there, and they stay there from generation to generation. They are building towns and cities all over the vast extent of this Empire, and building them far better than our new towns at home. Dalny is only one of thousands of the same description and just as good. Generally, in her Asiatic provinces these towns are near neighbours to a native town, where, in consequence of the Russian neighbour, peace reigns supreme and you may pass in perfect safety. This is especially the case in Turkestan and Manchuria. When Russia conquers a country she does it thoroughly, and with, I venture to say, no more bloodshed than England or France. After she has accomplished her purpose, she takes very good care of her people. She is perfectly

aware that her army of ex-serfs are a stupid lot and scarcely capable of caring for themselves; so that when, for instance, a lot of them go to a city to work, their wages are not handed over to them to be squandered, but sent back to the father of their village, who first pays their debts, then provides for their families, and then gives what is left to the men. Have we ever taken such care of our ex-slaves? Was our Fifteenth Amendment other than the acme of cruelty to the blacks—placing a power in their hands which they did not know how to use; making them the victims of a horde of carpetbaggers, and forcing us, State by State, to disfranchise them?

It was my good fortune when last in St. Petersburg to attend the military horse show. As I sat in a box surrounded by all the gay life of the capital I could not but feel that there was a strong resemblance between the faces around me and our own people at home. But for the brilliant uniforms one might have fancied oneself in the Madison Square Garden. There were some burly faces and forms around, but no greater number of them than one could notice at home. The others, men and women, bore the same nervous, highstrung characteristics so marked in our own people. If the language had all been English,—and there was much of that tongue to be heard,—I should have felt more at home than I have ever done in a like assemblage in England. I hold the most friendly feelings towards Great Britain and her people, but I really do not think that an American ever feels really at home amongst her people. Our women may do so after years of married life there, but an American man who gives up

his country and settles in England loses everything in the former save the money which enables him to live in the latter, where he will never be other than an outsider. We have had some very marked instances of that. As for Russia's feelings towards America, what they have been in the past was plainly set forth in Louis Napoleon's statement to the Confederate envoy, Mr. Lamar,—"It would be fruitless to approach the Court of St. Petersburg, as not only the Emperor, but all his advisers are hopelessly prejudiced in favour of the United States,"—and, in the Czar's instructions that his fleets assemble in the harbours of New York and San Francisco, and if any adverse demonstrations should be made by France or England, to place those fleets at the disposal of the Federal government with the information that "if money was needed it would be furnished, and if more ships were wanted they would be sent, and if men were needed they would be forthcoming." Why the Government of the Russians should feel and act as it did is a curious question. I do not believe that it was a desire to thwart England, but rather a foreknowledge of the place America would occupy amongst the nations of the future, especially in the Far East, and a desire for the friendship of that future power which would there be a neighbour, but, whatever the reason, the friendship was *there*,—*that* should not be forgotten.

Whatever be the outcome of this present war, it should at least cause our American public to inform itself concerning the Russian empire and its people. The ignorance on that subject at present is mortifying, to say the least.



CHAPTER XXX

THE DRIVE TO OSH

HAVING ordered horses for our tarantass at 10 P.M., they of course do not come, and we send after them, finally getting off at 11.30; but, as it is glorious moonlight, we do not mind the delay. Started at last, we rattle away at a lively pace, but our bells are all tied until we leave the town, from which we only proceed one station when we are stopped "until seven in the morning," by finding that two other vehicles have used all the horses. These posts are only furnished with enough animals for three tarantasses, and the waits on one's journey are sometimes very lengthy. There is nothing for it but to go to sleep, in the machine of course, and there, in the middle of the high road, we pass the night.

The next day is a very successful one, as tarantass rides go. We are not delayed at the posts, the horses make rapid time, and toward sunset, after an intensely hot day, we approach Khojend. The birds of this land are many and gorgeous, but all songless; and I have been greatly interested in the animal life of the desert; there was one strange creature—small, not more than three inches long—

that crept out of the blazing rocks and stared at us. I could not make out what it was, but it looked like one of Doré's distorted shapes from Dante's *Inferno* —like the skeleton of a lost soul.

As we round the shoulder of a low mountain that has been in front of us all day, the entire range of



OUR TARANTASS

the Alai spreads before us in magnificent panorama. Below, a green belt of trees denotes the presence of water—the Sira Daria; above, rise the yellow cliffs of the lower mountains; while far into the sky the greater range of more than twenty thousand feet in altitude rolls its masses of snowy billows up towards heaven. Small wonder that the Kirghiz call that range "Paradise." Those are the northern crest of the "roof of the world" where one finds the high, cold valley of the Pamirs, that sad land whose lowest elevation is twelve thousand feet, where the lakes

freeze in July and no grass will grow—where the winds are so terrible that they deprive one of breath and cause the sheep to huddle together and crouch down for safety. Then the sun looks down like a copper disk, lifeless, dull. These winds penetrate the lower valleys, and one comes down upon us beyond Khojend, so that we are obliged to stop a time in self-defence.

It is 142 miles from Tashkendt to Khojend, done to-day by rail in a few hours, but in tarantass times only in some thirty hours. However, to go by rail you must return to the junction at Jizak.

After leaving Khojend the traveller enters the province of Ferghana, a name so old that the Arabs knew it in the eighth century; and the Chinese in the fourth century called it Feihan. It is a province of some thirty thousand square miles, all but one-fifth of which is mountainous.

The mountains of Ferghana are rich in minerals; iron, lead, coal, rock crystal, amethyst, silver, mica, turquoise, sulphur, and naphtha are found in abundance. Its vegetable and fruit products are even more varied than its mineral. Amongst them one finds sixteen varieties of grapes. There are melons of all sizes, delicious in taste, while mulberries are showered upon your head from every clump of trees. We pass Khojend without stopping, save for a change of horses and some tea, and a confab with an old woman and her sons from Andijan, whose invitation to visit we shall scarce accept. Then all night forward, through clouds of dust, until it is impossible to do aught save sit up and gasp. The following day brings our first real experience of post delays.

From eight to twelve we await the passage of the mails, and at four are started again, to be stopped within ten versts of Khokand, and informed that six hours will be our wait this time. It is finally cut down to three, so that at nine we rattle into Khokand, very weary, dirty men, having had nothing to eat worth mentioning for two days. Khokand is the chief town of the province of Ferghana, and of some fifty thousand inhabitants. But the approaching traveller wonders where they are. There is no evidence of any such population as our tarantass rattles into the place up a long avenue of unusual width which, bordered by trees, stretches away before us, blocked in the distance by what turns out to be the hotel. Any voice that sounds a greeting is most welcome to one under such circumstances, and at Khokand we are saluted by a dapper little merchant from Moscow, who crossed the Caspian on our ship. He had passed our tarantass, and had ordered rooms reserved for us at the only hotel in the place—Hôtel de l'Europe. These he showed us with a flourish, and we accepted with deep gratitude. They were hot and smelt of paint; were small and near the kitchen, or, rather, the porch, where the waiter washed all things in one pail, not troubling himself to change the water too often. When one has lived on liquid food for two days, principally tea, one fully appreciates a beefsteak and a bottle of beer, and also a place, be it bed or board, which, unlike the tarantass, will allow one to stretch out at full length. I slept soundly in Khokand the sleep of utter weariness, notwithstanding the charms of the female orchestra, whose discords continued far into the night, finally

driving the dapper little merchant to desperation and the police station for relief. Thereafter silence reigned supreme over the Far-Eastern and very ancient city of the khans of Khokand. Modern Khokand is the usual Russian town of broad avenues, lined with either silver-leaf or Lombardy poplars: ancient Khokand, the usual Sart town, all a jumble of crooked streets, lined by mud houses and walls; in the heart of the whole the usual "Medressé" and bazaar, the usual picturesque crowds of dressed and undressed, most of the latter being boys.

The heat at Khokand is intense, and we decide to start for Marghilan at 4 P.M., and travel until midnight, by which time we should reach the latter town, our last stopping-place before Osh. It is blazing hot as we start out, and the wind, being with us, blows heated blasts down our backs and drowns us in dust. Our pace is more rapid than heretofore, no rocks or ruts are avoided, and it is well the machine was repaired at Khokand. However, one pardons roughness here if it means progress; and it does mean progress until we roll into the last post, thirty versts from Marghilan, and are met with the news: "No horses until 2 P.M. to-morrow." We are not entirely unprepared for this, having encountered the mails, westward bound, just outside the village, and knowing that they use up the horses. There is nothing to be done save to pass the night as best we may, which I do in the tarantass, and F—— on the door-step of the post-house. No traveller complains of delay caused by the passage of the post,—that is important business,—but when 3 A.M. brings in two officers, who, possessing a

"podorozhnaya," take our horses, and our departure is put off four hours more, and when I learn that they are not on government affairs, I confess I lose patience. It would appear that the whole army and their relations are provided with these passes, which enable them to delay every one else. We are but fifteen miles from our destination, yet if one of us were ill we could do nothing but wait. Fact is, F—— is not well, and should reach a place where he can be quiet. But no; wait we must. Of course, these passes or permits are, in one sense, like passes on a railroad: the system could be easily overdone, were there many travellers; but there are not half a dozen in twelve months. It is certainly galling for two men, one of whose time is limited, to be kept waiting an indefinite period at a wretched post-station, while the nurses and children of the officers, on the strength of their passes, use up the horses between the points on the road in picnic jaunts and in calling tours between the posts. These "podorozhnayas" simply give one the right to *hire* horses *ahead* of the ordinary traveller; in other words, if four or five parties reach a post together, those holding such passes get their horses first, and they pay for them. The granting of them does not entail any moneyed loss to the Government. Once or twice our horses have been taken from us as we were actually starting, and we had to wait hours. Imagine our exasperation, especially as those who took them were evidently not out on government affairs, but simply for pleasure.

In the fourteenth century Khokand valley formed part of the empire of Tamerlane, and his descendant

in the fifth generation was born in its town of Andijan. He was the last of his line, and in 1504 fled to India. The valley was divided and ruled over by several Khoja or small princes. Abd-al-Kanin Bi built the present town. Khokand and Tashkendt were both under Chinese dominion in 1759. The first official intercourse with Russia occurred about 1835, and the Englishman Arthur Connolly was entertained by the Khan here in 1841. That ruler came to an end in 1841 after a war with Bokhara, by whose Amir he was executed, and who married his wife, and forty carloads of other wives were also taken to Bokhara. The khanate seems to have had a sad time under the rule of Bokhara,—the oft-told story of oppression, outrage, and murder, resulting in a general insurrection which drove out the oppressors. But the history of the lesser state is not of interest. Suffice it to state that Russia annexed the khanate in 1876 under the name of Ferghana, since which time there has been peace, with perfect safety to life and property.

It is a fact, and a strange fact, that one feels, and is, safer in these Central Asian towns to-day than in those of Siberia. This arises from the mistake that Russia made in sending her criminal classes to that country. England produced the same state of affairs by sending her convicts to Tasmania and Australia. Their blight would seem still to rest upon beautiful Tasmania, but it has passed for ever away from Australia, and so it will in time from Siberia, as Russia has ceased to send her criminals there save to the island of Saghalien.

As we approach Marghilan, a city of 35,000 in-

habitants, the chief town of the province of Ferghana, and possessing a large trade with Persia, soldiers come out and present arms, and before we pass down one block, a mounted policeman dashes ahead of us toward the hotel. Does it mean Siberia or an invitation to dinner? He proved to be an aide-de-camp to the governor, who has engaged rooms for us at the hotel. As we are the only guests therein, the attention, though polite, was scarcely needed. However, we appreciate the attention and are grateful accordingly.

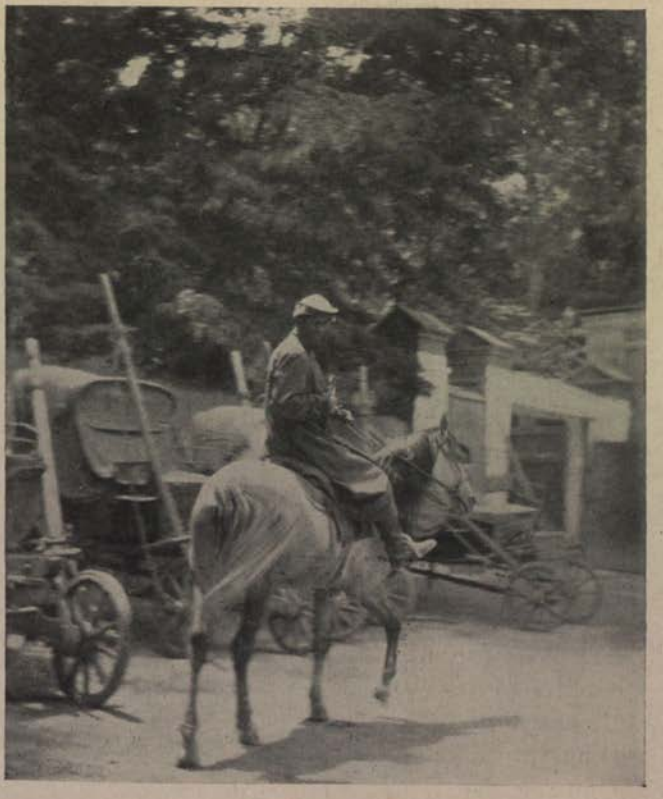
Marghilan is a spot that could have no existence save for irrigation. Stop that, and the hot blasts from the desert in which she is placed would burn her up in a month's time. Her streets resemble Paris in their width and magnificent length. Her squares, like Paris also, are superb; but when one comes to look for the houses, that resemblance ceases. If one walks around, one may, by careful inspection, perhaps find a house or two. It is very hot here; each window is provided with a heavy felt shutter to keep out light and heat; and my thermometer rises, in the sun, to one hundred and thirty degrees, and then goes out of business. We shall press on to Osh, where it should be cooler, as that point stands at an elevation of some four thousand feet.

We certainly cannot but feel pleased and very grateful for the delightful hospitality that has greeted us here at the house of Marghilan's governor. But for the fact that his house is full of visitors already, he would have carried us there bag and baggage; and as it is, we are there most of the time, and

always for dinner. At our last feast—for all good meals are feasts to travellers in this Eastern land—we met the conqueror and hero of the Pamir region, Jorenoff. He spoke, unfortunately, nothing save Russian, so it was but "a glance of the eye." French, German, and also English, for a wonder, flowed around us in ceaseless chatter. One Russian countess asked me whether she would meet with such hospitality were she to come as a stranger to our land. That she would not, even were she properly introduced, I knew well; but I could not do otherwise than assure her to the contrary. However, there is much to be said in our defence. All who come here, and they do not amount to more than half a dozen a year, are not only fully vouched for, and heralded weeks in advance, but are also welcomed for the breath of the outside world which they bring with them to these lonely towns; while to our open doors come so many thousands, even from Russia, that to welcome each and all would pauperise the land in short order. Also, we have had the misfortune to be gloriously fooled by many foreign adventurers of both sexes, hence are, perhaps, overcautious.

The Russians have a quaint and pleasant custom of shaking hands with their host and hostess as they rise from the dinner-table—a delicate acknowledgment of hospitality.

We spend but two days in the town, buying tents and provisions, which we are told cannot be bought at Osh. Still, we confine ourselves to the smallest amount, as transportation in the tarantass is destruction to all things.



GUIDE RACHMED

Rachmed, a mountain guide engaged in Samarkand, arrives with our luggage direct from that place, and we go forward once more, leaving at night to avoid the heat, and arriving at Osh at 11 A.M. There is no hotel or place to lay one's head, save at the post-house, which we take possession of, notwithstanding the loud protestations of the dainty landlady thereof, who certainly, in addition to her two hundred pounds, possessed the shrillest voice I have heard in some time. I think, if it had not been for Colonel Grombschefsky's orders, she would have gotten the better of us, and bundled us out, bag and baggage, into the street. His orders changed her as the sun drives away clouds, and thereafter she was all smiles, and wept in my arms at my departure.

There was music in the howling of that gale.





CHAPTER XXXI

OSH AND DEPARTURE FOR THE MOUNTAINS

OSH.

THIS little hamlet of Osh is placed just where the land "quivers on the rise" from plain to mountains. Jagged peaks rise around it in welcome variation from the endless steppes behind us, while the near foreground holds a rugged mass called the "Throne of Solomon." They have a habit of moving most of the personages in sacred history to this land, which must have been more remote in the days of that monarch's splendour than it is now. At all events, his throne is here. On it he gave that celebrated judgment about the infants, though now they cannot show you even a piece of either child. The Greek or Roman Church would certainly be able to show most of both. The horizon is bounded on the southward by the Alai Mountains, snow-crowned and rugged, while the south-west settles down into the dreary steppes, over which we have been travelling for a week.

Did I mention the fact that horse-hire is not dear in Turkestan? We paid nine kopecks a verst (three-quarters of a mile) for three, a kopeck being half a cent. I have just completed my bargain for the journey through the mountains, four hundred versts,

for nine roubles per horse. I shall need six, so that the gigantic sum of fifty-four roubles, or twenty-seven dollars, will be needed to carry me some three hundred miles.

The one or two stores which Osh possesses we about buy out. We also secure two tents. F—— buys a very excellent fur-lined coat for twenty-four roubles. All things are cheap here, save such as come from the West. Colonel Grombschefsky—governor of the province—is of the utmost service to us, and seems so glad to be so that we almost forget that it is all a favour on his part, and one to which we have no claim. He is the first, last, and only official in the land to render us *real* assistance. He also asks us to dinner every day and we do not miss any day, knowing that, when once we start into the hills, we shall "all hope abandon" so far as good food is concerned.

The governor's house stands high over the town, in the midst of pleasant gardens, abounding in fruits and flowers, and fresh with the running of many waters. Below sleeps the little hamlet, in its bower of silver-leaved poplars. Solomon's Throne, purple in the setting sun, with its rear-guard of mountains, stands in eternal watch; while away to the westward and northward, the steppes are fast thickening with shadows. We shall start on the morrow, and therefore linger long in this hospitable mansion, leaving it and its master with many thanks and regrets, taking with us many memories of its coolness and rest, and of his warm, generous heart.

July 1st.

It is 10 A.M. before our "pack" is in starting order and we get under way for the wilderness. I

have six horses in my train, and F—— nine in his; but I shall keep this lot until my return here, a fortnight hence. We have packed everything possible in boxes or thick bags, and so have little trouble in arranging, and these Sarts rope them to the pack-saddles so securely that they arrive at our first point, Langar (twenty-eight versts), in good condition. I have had cases in our Rocky Mountains ruined the first day by carelessness in packing. Langar is nothing save a "Membashie's" tomb and a stream of running water. The first, though it is picturesque, with its broken dome and black plume, we might do without, but not the water. It means life. Here, at all events, it does, and to-night it takes the shape of a sparkling brook. There is some quarrelling over the preparation of the first dinner, but we get it at last. Soup, canned salmon, tea, and rice make us happy and sleepy, and I do not mind the fact that my camp-bed has an iron rod that before day nearly breaks my back. How deliciously cool the air blows through the tent! which, by the way, is not our own—they are of canvas, while this is one of those great "yourts" of the Kirghiz, a circular structure of some ten feet in diameter and as many high. It is not long before silence settles over our first night in camp in Central Asia.

Half-past four brings daylight. Chattering Sarts, Rachmed and Ham Rachoul making the fire, neighing horses, etc., making sleep impossible, we order in the tea and boiled eggs. Both are delicious, and of the latter we consume six apiece. It is never well to start ahead of your camp, if you desire its

arrival before midnight; but once get it under way, and it will move steadily forward all day. So we wait and start with it, the result being that we reach Gulcha about the same time. *En route*, two passes are crossed, one being higher than Mount Washington. The views are beautiful, and ever and anon we catch a glimpse of the vast fields of snow, still three days away. The forty versts to Gulcha are covered in about nine hours, and as we descend into its valley we are met by a messenger from the Membashie.[1] Colonel Grombschefsky had notified him of our coming, and we find him awaiting us on the farther side of the rushing Gulcha River. After a dignified Oriental salute, he conducts us to a yourt like the one of last night, whereupon I am ashamed to confess that I stretch myself out and go sound asleep in the presence of his Highness. But one meets so many highnesses, and I am so weary, that Nature takes matters into her own hands.

I have sent Rachmed into town with my bed to have those rods cut out. It is an ordinary camp-bed, iron and folding. It will, of course, weaken it, but I cannot sleep on it as it is. Now I shall have canvas tied over the whole. We were strongly advised not to sleep on the ground, or we would not have bothered about beds. It is said that fever is contracted by sleeping on the ground.

Let me recommend travellers to bring a bath-robe or so when they follow in my footsteps to this wilderness. I really think it is more useful than anything else I possess. For instance, to-day, when I wanted a dip in the Gulcha River, half a mile off,

[1] A chief amongst the Kirghiz.

it came in most handily, and the natives evidently considered it a robe of state. Between that, my yellow umbrella, and my spurs, I can see that I stand high in their admiration. However, it is the absolute comfort of a robe that I mention now.

We have set Rachmed to making chicken soup. I fancy it will be ready to-morrow. Concerning camp life here, I think that one coming to these countries should in our own land lay in a supply of canned goods. They cannot be gotten in Russia, and most of Europe seems prejudiced against them. They could be shipped direct by sea to Batoum. I mean the necessaries of life, not the luxuries. We have been able to procure a little canned salmon and venison in Osh, which seems so ancient that we are almost afraid to eat it, and I think with envy of all in our stores at home. So far, except at some post-stations, we have always been able to procure eggs and milk, which, with tea, will keep a man going, though the desire for meat will be unpleasantly strong at times; but one must become accustomed to go without that. I fancy, as I go forward, I shall have but little thereof.

I cannot but compare the industry and promptness of these guides and packers with those in our Western mountains. These move quickly and do our bidding as ordered. There is no delay in packing and starting; while with our Western "gentlemen," who are at all times better than their employers, things are far different. I shall not forget my last visit to our wilderness. The head guide, "Handsome Jack," posed most charmingly against the rising moon, while "Pretty Dick" moved quickly

only when there were girls in sight, of which there seemed always any number when he was known to be coming. If we ordered an early start, the guides raised their eyebrows in polite surprise, and we, if luck went well, got off at 9 A.M. Here a five-o'clock order for moving is generally obeyed to within half an hour, and these men are not above their business. As I sit in my yourt writing this morning, their clatter and noise is tremendous; but I notice that the work moves steadily forward, and now Rachmed appears at the door, and with a deep salaam announces that all is ready, and we move onward more and more into the heart of the mountains.

This is our last yourt: to-night we shall raise our own tents and be our own landlords.

The erection of a yourt is not a small undertaking. We had expected to see no more of them, but the one of last night reached here almost as soon as we did. It required a horse and a cow to carry it. The rack-like framework is first erected in circular form, after which a dome-like top of staves, open in the centre, is bound on with rope. Around the frame is stretched a bamboo screen, and over that and the top skins are drawn and bound down. A door gives entrance to the structure, which no storm seems able to blow over. They are cool in summer and warm in winter, and the opening in the top allows one to build a fire in the tent in cold weather. I trust I may never be called upon to inhabit a place less comfortable, in which case I have no dread of my future habitations.

These regions are alive with our domestic pigeons. F—— has killed two just now, which will come in

well for dinner, but it seemed cruel to kill them. I felt more resentment than pity when I discovered that they were too tough to eat. I notice during our day's ride some birds of most exquisite plumage. One on a rock near by is clothed as though condemned to the penitentiary for life, and it is in fact called the "jail-bird." The black and white stripes are of equal breadth, and pass around the body and wings, while the neck, head, and comb are of a brilliant brown. Another is of a turquoise blue and gold; while a third has wings of a moss-green colour, which shade off into the olive of its neck and deep crimson of the head and breast. There seem to be no cows in this region; at least one would so judge, as we can get nothing save koumiss, a liquid which, like the Mexican pulque, I cannot drink.

Our route to-day covered only twenty versts, which left us most of the afternoon in camp. One must—on account of the horses—regulate the journeys by the grass to be found, of which there is not much in these mountains. The air does not turn fresh at sunset, as in our Rockies, but is cool and balmy, and becomes cold before daybreak, when a strong wind generally precedes the rising of the sun by an hour or so. Last night I slept under two blankets.



CHAPTER XXXII

TO THE VALLEY OF PARADISE

"BETTER twenty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay," but, Cathay in these solitudes as the sun rises is certainly very beautiful, and I doubt not that the human body would stand the cycle here better than the twenty years in the gay cities of the world. Man seems to come in close communion with the great hereafter in these mountains, to attain, as it were, even here on earth, "a closer walk with God." All the littlenesses and smallnesses that may have beset his life drop away and are forgotten, and I think if he were called to the Divine Presence from the heart of these hills that the recording angel would wipe out much of his indebtedness, because of his forgiveness of all below.

One soon adopts caravan hours—asleep before nine o'clock, awakened before 4.30 A.M., which does not seem so very early, and the air at that hour is too full of life for sleep—"death's younger brother" —to be indulged in. Here come the horses back from the higher mountains, whither they went at sunset in search of grass. By 5.30 we are again *en route*.

Rachmed has been giving us his experience in Paris. Between his half a dozen French words, his flow of Sart, Persian, and Chinese, intermixed with many gestures, it was intensely funny. It would appear that he was most attractive to the women, who gathered around him in such flocks at a restaurant that he could not eat his dinner, and, therefore, *à la Turque*, knocked down one or two of them, and was promptly jailed by the police. It took several linguists from the university, together with Bonvalot, to release him, after which he declared, "Paris finish beaucoup femme, beaucoup femme," and left for London, where he was unmolested. He is not the first, as he will not be the last, for whom the women of Paris have proven too much. We were diverted from his reminiscences by a sudden commotion when it was discovered that "Balaam's Ass" (our one donkey) had devoured the chief's dinner. That donkey is wise beyond his generation. I notice that he eats everything in sight and rests on all occasions.

This extensive camp has certainly not been necessary so far, as this road could be traversed by the tarantass. In fact, the great two-wheeled cart, the arba, does come here, and an army could easily be marched swiftly southward.

Our next day's ride is short, thirty-two versts over a jumble of mountains and valleys, for which even nature appears to have little use. No life, animal or vegetable, is to be seen anywhere. Even the wandering Kirghiz appear to have given up in despair. About noon, we pass Surfe Kuhrghan, a desolate, deserted, and useless fort, useless even to



APPROACH TO THE VALE OF PARADISE

Russia. Around its base rushes the Gulcha River, while the red cliffs rise behind it, to be backed in turn by the higher mountains, over which the Terek Pass is laid out; but because of the mud upon it, we must go over the Taldek, and thereby add a day or more to our journey.

AKBOSAGA, July.

At Akbosaga we enter a high valley, its altitude somewhere between eight and nine thousand feet. In appearance it greatly reminds me of the Engadine. To-day we shall cross the Taldek Pass. The Alai Valley lies just beyond. In the Sart language the word means "Paradise."

The passage of the Taldek Pass, eleven thousand eight hundred feet in altitude, affords us some fine scenery. The passage is very easy at this season. As we descended the south side, the entire range of Trans-Alai Mountains spread before us — a very magnificent sight, not surpassed, as a whole, on the globe, and the vale of Paradise lies at our feet—a long, green valley, a vast emerald in a frame of snow. We camp there at night in the midst of the first large Kirghiz town that we have seen. A strange sight: numbers of yourts, surrounded by groups of fantastically dressed women and dark-looking men; herds of horses, cows, and camels wandering hither and thither over the rich grass. The Kizil-Su (Red River) flows, copper-coloured, before my tent, while around the valley rise the mountains in snowy masses until lost in cloudland. It is only the strong arm of Russia that protects me here. Two months since, a Russian

traveller and his attendants were murdered on the Terek Pass by their guide, one of these same Kirghiz; but Russian vengeance found the murderer in short order and he now awaits the rope at Marghilan. They seem friendly here now, and have just sent a deputation to me with some fresh milk, which is most acceptable. Rachmed takes great delight in trying to induce me to drink koumiss and other stuffs, but does not succeed. So the milk is most welcome. When the Kirghiz presented it he placed his hand on his belt and made a bow that with us would convince one that he was troubled with violent disorder in that portion of his anatomy, but here it is a salutation denoting the deepest respect.

I do not know whether or not he expects a return present, and so, being in doubt, do nothing. We stand for some time smilingly regarding each other. I know what I think of him, but what does he think of me? My tired Western face and Occidental clothing must strike him as strangely out of place in this Far-Eastern valley of Paradise. Be that as it may, however, he says nothing, but after a space and another deep genuflexion departs toward his tent, beyond which the moon is just rising. As she floods the valley with a heavenly splendour the river glitters like silver and the silent city on its banks seems not of this earth. All out over the grass the camels are resting and even the dogs are asleep; my own camp has long since gone to bed, save Rachmed, who comes to my tent for his evening gossip, to which I pay little heed until he insists upon knowing why I am not married, etc., — he himself has two wives. The first "lost a leg soon

after marriage and was not much use," so he married another; "with three legs the two get along very well." As he talks I drift into slumber and so into dreamland, where camels, turbaned figures, and three-legged wives are strangely mingling in a valley surrounded by snow mountains, over which a full moon is gleaming.





CHAPTER XXXIII

THE MOUNTAINS AND THE DWELLERS THEREIN

IT is not altogether a pleasant thing, when you are up and ready for a long ride, to find that the horses are off in the mountains, and to be told that the Sart in charge has probably gone to sleep and won't wake up for hours. Such is my case at present. There is absolutely nothing to be done or said about it, and it is evidently of no use to get angry. Heaven knows when my handful of horses will become separated again from the thousands of animals gone from here to the mountains. Of the multitude on the plain last night nothing now remains save some old men and women and (I should not forget him) the chief of the tribe, who, in gorgeous raiment, came to call again this morning. The matter of the horses is more serious than I thought for. It seems that the man in charge slept on here in camp, while our animals wandered off with the Kirghiz horses to the hills. I suppose they will return to-night, and at best it is but a day lost; but they may wander backward toward Osh. They are finally found, and we start some three hours late. The Sart who is to blame is in mortal terror lest I write to Colonel Grombschefsky, which would mean fine and impris-

onment for him. I shall hold it over him to insure no repetition. The loss of one's horses here is much like being dropped overboard at sea, the delay was nothing, as I at least am not pressed for time.

My route lies directly eastward through the Alai Valley, and I shall stop to-night at the Russian frontier fort of Irkeshtan. F—— has gone off on a hunting trip, so this is my first day alone. All the morning I have jogged along in silence, Rachmed in front and the pack behind, none of them speaking enough French to render conversation possible. It is not cheerful work, but it can't be helped; so I spend my time between admiration of the mountains and the flora. The latter is very extensive. The "edelweiss," so sought after in Switzerland, grows all over this valley; so do the "gentian" and "forget-me-not." The valley is treeless; there is no wood anywhere, and Rachmed, in the absence of the pack, is forced to make tea over a fire of dry manure —not a very rapid operation. How quiet it all is! Only he and I alone here in all this wilderness! The grass is deep and green and the brook gurgles onward, singing. Around the shoulder of a great rock a solitary donkey bearing a man makes his appearance, and is followed in sedate fashion by a camel, then another and another, until I am surrounded by a vast concourse, when that which was lonely and deserted becomes all alive and bustling with the life of another of those moving cities of the mountains, one of those gigantic caravans which for ages have trodden these paths from the Celestial Kingdom to the barbarous West. This one to-day must be composed of some five hundred of those patient "ships

of the desert." The scene is most picturesque and patriarchal. Near the "still waters" are the huge bales of goods, watched over by turbaned and bearded figures, while the tent of the Membashie rises, a blue patch, from the edge of the pool. Around soar the gigantic mountains, green merging into grey, grey melting into the everlasting snows, which show sharp and clear against the intense blue of the sky. Hither and thither, wandering over the grass in couples or strings of fifty or a hundred, noiselessly move the camels, each division led by a stately patriarchal figure, which, if it meets my glance, immediately bends low in deep salaam. It is the old, old life of the Bible unchanged by the passing centuries—the life that Abraham knew. Indeed the gentle, majestic presence of the Nazarene would not greatly surprise one here.

Later in the day we crossed the two branches of the Kizil-Su River, the waters of which, always as red as copper, and full of sand, are often in beautiful contrast with the blues and greens of the mountain brooks. It was rather difficult work at times getting the pack over. All of them hesitated save Balaam's Ass, who always made straight for the flood, and never seemed to wet anything he carried. However, his burden has been so greatly reduced that he might almost be considered a "parlour boarder." He certainly boards near my tent, and enters into confidences two or three times each night, so that I fear I offer up a prayer that he may not find his voice.

There are on the maps two "Kizil-Su" rivers, one flowing west from Alai and joining the Oxus, so that its waters, such as escape destruction in the

black sand of the desert, enter the Sea of Aral, while the other flows eastward, entering the river Kashgar. The gorges of the latter, which we are just entering, are very grand; great masses of red sandstone, carved into fantastic shapes by the passing of winds and waters and the flight of time.

At present I am left high and dry on a stony island in the middle of the Kizil-Su, with nothing in the shape of baggage save my kodak and a yellow umbrella. The pack has gone forward to effect a passage, and I shall be "sent for." If not, I shall return to Fort Irkeshtan, which we have left but two versts behind, and in doing so bid farewell to all that is Russian. Whatever I may think of Russian methods of government,— and I am rapidly coming to the conclusion that that Government knows best about her own affairs,—I have nothing save praise for Russian hospitality, from Prince Galitzin at St. Petersburg to the little yellow-headed custodian of this extreme outpost of the great Empire, as he stood, cap in hand, bowing an adieu. He treated us to our last samovar and cakes, and bestowed upon me two chickens and half a dozen eggs, a present for which he absolutely refused all payment, and which, let me tell you, in this barren land, was more appreciated than the most dainty dinner when in Paris.

The river is crossed at last, and I turn to take a last look at its red tide, its crimson rocks, its snow-clad mountains, and then move onward into China. Down the valley of a dried-up creek moves the pack, and Rachmed and I follow. Yesterday all was life and movement, green grass and rushing streams,

while the air was laden with the perfume of many flowers. This valley up which we are travelling is barren of life of any sort, save that shown by some straggling sage-bushes, while here and there the skeleton of some dead camel grins ghastly from the yellow sands. The scenery loses its interest, and, dropping my bridle, I allow my horse to plod onward (which he does with his eyes shut, apparently, as he shortly runs into a rock), while my thoughts quickly span the distance between here and home; but one does not dream long in such a place. Down the gully comes a hot wind that would be suffocating but for a counter-breeze of delicious coolness from the Alai Mountains behind us. Onward for three hours we plod, until finally a wide green valley opens out, and the horses press on, hoping for water, only to be disappointed—nothing in it save sand and sage-brush. It is not until another hour is passed that we reach the Chinese post, Ulkchat, where we remain for the night. It is the extreme western post of the Celestial Empire, and evidently considered amply able to protect itself, as not a soldier is to be seen—nothing near the fort save a lonely camel, which growls at us as we pass, fearing to be disturbed; but with a clean tent to sleep in, he need not fear that I want that dirty hole; and Rachmed and the Sarts always prefer to sleep in the open air.

Ulkchat is situated in a green oasis, with many rushing brooks around it, and might be made a delightful spot; but the world has enough and to spare of such without penetrating the silence of these mountains.

There is such a thing as having too much of patri-

archal life, as I discovered on awakening from a nap this afternoon and finding a bearded goat in my tent, calmly devouring a trunk-strap. He moved off with extreme dignity when I, shameful to relate, kicked him out.

Rachmed has been in for his usual evening chatter, and though his words are a grand mixture of a dozen languages, he manages to make himself understood. My not being well to-day furnishes him with his text. He says Prince G—— was sick all the time, and the Duke D—— ditto. His confab is interrupted by the arrival of the Membashie, or village chief, who brings a sheep to me as a present, and in return for which I give him a silver watch, which makes him strut like a turkey cock. He does not know how cheaply they are made in the West, nor that I have laid in a supply for just such occasions.

It is not much fun being ill, but I am alone to blame. I knew those greasy cakes at Fort Irkeshtan would not agree with me, but nothing but tea and canned things for days made me forgetful.

In my notes of yesterday I find I was entirely wrong. This is not the Chinese fort Ulkchat, but a stopping-point called the "Fort," a mere Dak bungalow, so called even here, which is our first evidence of Anglo-Indian influence, even though we be so far off that frontier.

July 9th.

We lunch to-day in a grove of old trees, that, though poplar, have much the appearance of the olive, and I think the Garden of Gethsemane must

have been much such a spot, not only in the days of the Passion, but centuries after; and, indeed, that sacred bit of ground would look to-day much as this does, had it not been desecrated by the wall which incloses it, and by the many gaudy Roman shrines. To my mind, were it open and free to all; were its fountains the trysting-place of all nations, and its trees still shelters for the camel; if one could, in fact, wander under their venerable shade alone and with free rein to such thoughts as must come to the hardest of hearts there, I think Gethsemane would be a much more sacred spot than now, when one has often great difficulty in awakening the sleeping monk, who, when he does unlock the low door to you, disgusts you by the smell of garlic and of his foul person. Here in the heart of Asia this solemn spot is clothed in silence, save for the murmur of the river, and the grumble of some camel from a caravan that I can just discern through the trees, whose gnarled and knotted trunks and dense foliage have afforded such a delightful hour of repose after a morning's journey through the heat and sand, and before an afternoon's ride of the same kind. I shall always think of it as my Garden of Gethsemane, only here there has been neither agony, nor sorrow, nor the memory thereof—simply dreamful ease.

We reached our last crossing of the Kizil-Su at about 2 P.M., and as Rachmed had no notion as to the ford, a Kirghiz came up on his camel and volunteered to pilot us across, which he did successfully. As usual, Baalam's Ass insisted upon staying in the water and had to be sent back for. One cannot

blame the beast on such a hot day. I would like to do the same myself.

Stopping for milk at the Kirghiz village, I was invited by my guide to enter his yourt (also called kibitka), an invitation I accepted, though with some trepidation on account of the dirt. He had



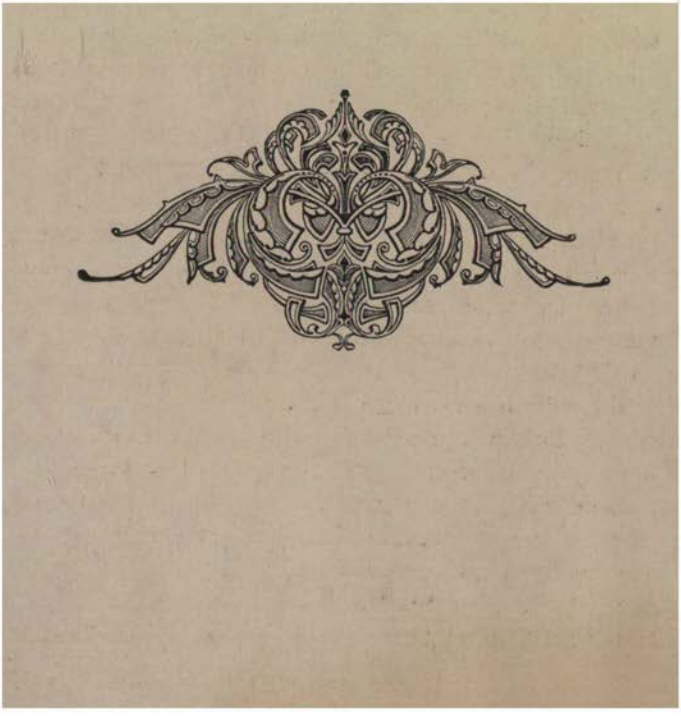
MY HOSTS IN THE DESERT

to kick aside several mangy dogs, and push away the baby camel, which, from the inside, blocked the entrance. How filthy everything was! yet one of the women drew out for my seat a rug that would honour any drawing-room at home, and then offered me a draught of clear, cool water in a dainty porcelain cup. Goats walked in and "bahed" at me; a dirty cat was rather more friendly than I desired,

while the people sat in a circle and were politely curious. I say "politely," because they could have given lessons to many at home, who, perhaps, think they do not need such instruction. The women wear towering white head-dresses, which are usually clean, but the remainder of each costume is generally composed of one dirty garment. The men "at home" wear as little as possible, but when out wear, even in this torrid weather, a sort of thick double-gown and a heavy felt hat. On leaving, I induced the family to allow me to kodak the entire establishment, a picture which I hope will develop well. They are certainly a very different race from any I have ever seen before. Rachmed tells me that the people of this camp live here in a sort of imprisonment. The Russians will not permit them to enter their paradise, the Alai, and the Chinese keep them here. What a life! The place is on the banks of the dirty Kizil-Su and surrounded by towering yellow cliffs which blaze like a furnace and reflect an almost intolerable heat from early morning to nightfall. When darkness descends the winds sweep down in icy blasts from the snows above, making the spot, by their extreme contrast to the day's heat, a place of torture.

We ride onward for two hours, over yellow, dusty rocks, and in a heat more oppressive than any I have yet endured. I neglected to mention our passing the Chinese fort Ulkchat, but the description I gave yesterday before we reached it will answer—"a wretched, dirty mud square," with no sign of life save the flag. If soldiers there were, they must have been sound asleep. Not even a

barking dog greeted us, and the desolation and squalor were most marked. The traveller may know Syria and Spain or the post-houses of Russia, and may declare that no places upon earth can show evidences of greater degradation and filth,—but he must enter the Celestial Empire to understand in any degree the meaning of those words.





CHAPTER XXXIV

WESTERN CHINA AND RETURN TO THE MOUNTAINS

I FIND I shall have to give up Kashgar, as I do not dare descend into the heat of the desert. So we turn, and after some hours reach the Kirghiz camp where we had been entertained the day before, and where I go to bed for thirty-six hours. However, I have missed only two days' journey and Kashgar, —not so much after all.

Now we are moving backward toward the high, cold valley of the Alai. Of course it is best. To-day should have been one of great heat, and therefore of intense distress for me, but during the night a high wind arose and is still blowing. It has lifted, carried far above us, and filled the sky with a grey veil of sand, which has shaded the sun and made the day bearable. To-night we shall put up in the grassy dominions of the Membashie to whom I gave the watch. We met him just now, and he pulled it out on me, explaining in gestures that it would not go! All nonsense; however, I gave him mine in exchange, and am now wearing his, which does go. He simply had neglected to wind it. Early day brought the same individual squatting before my tent and gravely regarding his watch. It had stopped

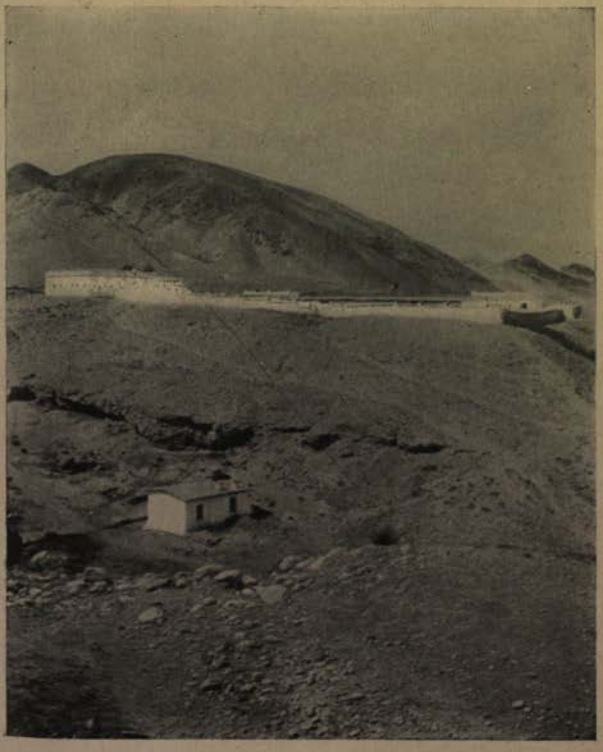
again, and for the same reason. The old man either considers it supernatural or as possessing perpetual motion. He came in state on this visit, attended by two or three of his cabinet, one of whom, at a wave from his hand, presented me with three eggs, and another with a bowl of milk. I was strong enough, in consequence of being able to avoid the eternal mutton soup, to take a long day's journey. I can see that I have risen greatly in the estimation of Rachmed and the Sarts of my camp by the presentation of that watch. Rachmed says that Prince G—— never gave such "valuable presents." The watch cost about $3.50; hence I wonder what sort of presents Prince G——'s could have been.

July 11th.

Russia viewed from the high plane of European and American civilisation, and Russia viewed from the high plains of China, present two very different pictures to the traveller. When I reached her outpost, Irkeshtan, this morning, after a hot journey over the desert, it seemed the acme of all civilisation—a very heart's content; and when I passed among the chickens and crows in its dirty courtyard and on into its low, dark, and dingy rooms, there seemed a place I should like to linger in, and the slovenly, ragged little keeper a prince of entertainers. I do not think that tea ever tastes so well as when the water comes from a samovar, and that particular, much battered and damaged samovar gave out most delicious hot water. The room was dark, and oh, so cool after the blazing sunlight! Again the Emperor's picture smiled benignly down upon me, and

I felt that at least there was a power that could be applied to in case of necessity, and with some chance of succour being granted; Russia, even in that remote outpost, seemed very active and stirring after the death-like silence of Western China, whose last fort, Ulkchat, I left this morning, a yellow mud structure, over which silence and decay held perpetual sway. Fort Irkeshtan was, on the contrary, a commodious white building, which gave evidence of occupation. There were thirty-six Cossacks there, though, aside from mine host in the post-house below the fort, I did not see one. I was not permitted to enter the military structure; only the post-house, whose custodian informed me that he was not married, and assured me that there was not a woman on the place. (It is marvellous what a conversation can be carried on by gestures.) I am sorry to say that, as I departed, I saw two Kirghiz women peering from behind the door of a yourt. It is not the first instance in which curiosity on the part of that sex has utterly destroyed the reputation of our race.

The journey backward into the beautiful Alai Valley is picturesque and interesting. We forded the Kizil-Su no less than six times, getting very wet once or twice. The cliffs become very wild and rugged as we mount, until finally we reach the upper tableland of this valley of Paradise. Once more the snowy mountains stretch away before us; once more the hills and valleys are covered with the patriarchal tribes and with flocks and herds; once more the air is full of health and life. We have ridden for hours over beds of flowers, and to-night, as I wait



FORT IRKESHTAN, TURKESTAN

for my dinner, my horses are taking theirs off of masses of mignonette, while the little donkey rolls in a bed of forget-me-nots.

The next morning we are delayed some time, and all because Balaam's Ass discovered a sweetheart somewhere near, and went off by night to visit her. How to discover our wandering Don Juan was a problem, and I was for moving on without him; but that was unnecessary. His voice gave him away, and he was brought back to duty.

These Sarts are a cunning lot, and will take advantage wherever they can. They are spending at least an hour fussing over their horses, this morning, on the plea that the extra duration of yesterday's journey renders it necessary. It makes no difference to me, as I shall insist upon just so many versts, no matter how late we are in getting off There is no use of becoming impatient. It simply starts them in a torrent of words, all of which are Greek to you, and also merely delays their progress. You will have your way in the end; and if you have any serious trouble, simply threaten them with a report to the Russian governor of the province, and they will come down from their high positions at once.

We camp for the night at "Houtmart." That is as near to the name as I can make out from Rachmed's pronunciation. It has no name or place on any map, but is simply two yourts that stand at the south of the Taldek Pass. I am met and welcomed by several Kirghiz, who apologise for the absence of their Membashie. He has crossed the Taldek to meet General Jorenoff, who is *en route*

to that mysterious region, the Pamirs. He is called their conqueror, though what satisfaction Russia has derived from the conquest of that region of snow and ice, a few wandering tribes, and their flocks, remains to be seen. Their control is probably necessary in her advance upon Western China and Tibet.

To-day I bid farewell—and I suppose for ever, as I shall not be likely to return here—to these Alai Mountains. They spread all along the south side of this great green valley in a wonderfully beautiful panorama. There are four peaks in sight now that must certainly far overtop anything in Switzerland. During the night fresh snow has fallen, and they glitter most dazzlingly down, almost to where the green line rises.

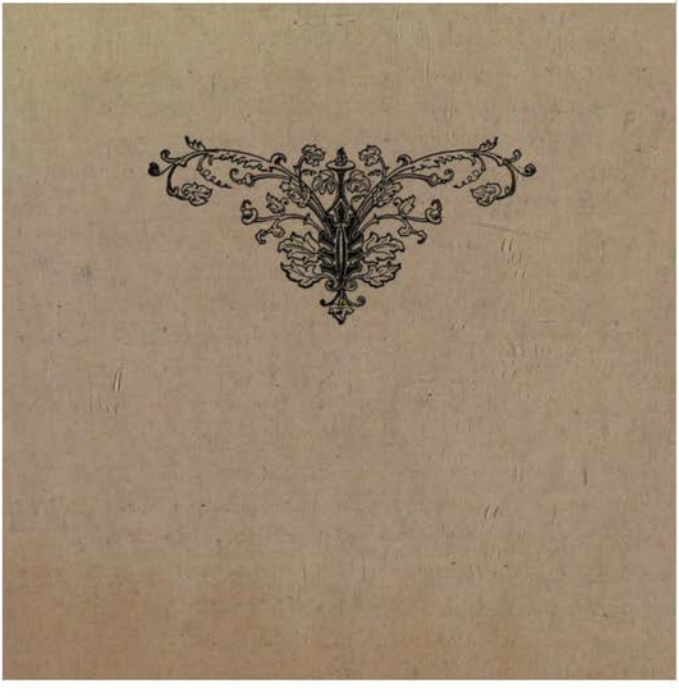
I awoke this morning and found the Sarts luxuriously asleep. One of them sent me word that he would go for the horses shortly. It is useless to say that he went very promptly. I have been rather too lenient with them. Like all servants over here, they respect only the hand that is firm. The "verst post," the first sign of civilisation, has appeared again. As we slowly mount the approach to the Taldek Pass, I turn for a farewell view of the vale of Paradise. I shall always think of it as a place of green grass and many flowers, of gurgling brooks and snowy mountains; as a place where I have found true hospitality. My return passage of the Taldek is much more interesting than was the first, the scenery as viewed from the south being more rugged and bold in outline. Of course, it in no way equals the view of the Trans-Alai, but you see none of that in your passage southward until the Taldek is be-

hind you. I am referring now simply to the scenery that pertains to that pass, and it is certainly much more interesting as viewed coming north. In addition, marvellous to relate, it does not in many places seem familiar, though my former passage was just ten days ago. So strange to me do portions of it appear, that I question Rachmed as to whether we have not come another route; but that could not be, as we are on the one military road in this section. The panorama is very varied and grand all day long, and the tempest of wind which sweeps from the north makes the day very pleasant. But it is all very solitary. Here and there one comes suddenly upon a lonely tomb. Each and all of the quaint structures have had their portals broken open by some marauder in search of treasure, which, of course, as the poor dead man had none in life, they find not.

We make forty-six versts to-day, and then halt on a green island in the Gulcha River. I immediately seek the shade of the adjacent cliffs, while Rachmed lies face down and goes to sleep with the sun blazing on his back. What a tough and what a queer people these Sarts are! Such an exposure would make a white man ill under this sun in short order. Just now, when I wanted to jump the stream, he objected, and wanted to carry me over. On my refusal, he went to sleep, while I sat down to watch for our caravan, which cannot, on account of the passes and head winds, be here for an hour or so.

All along the route to-day we found yourts erected and peopled by the many Sart and Kirghiz dignitaries of the sections hereabouts, waiting for the

passage of General Jorenoff, who, I hear, has reached Surfe-Kurghan. If so, we shall pass him to-morrow. One can easily see that, though young for a general, he is one of the strong arms of the great White Czar. His name, like all the other Russian names, I have given as it is pronounced. It would, in fact, be impossible to do otherwise.



CHAPTER XXXV

JORENOFF AND THE CONQUEST OF THE PAMIRS

ABOUT an hour from camp we met the first of Jorenoff's forces—horses and donkeys, most of them, but each and all laden with the necessaries for a three months' tour of the Pamirs. Then came the foot soldiers, about three hundred in all—Cossacks, of course. The uniforms consist of black boots, red trousers, white jackets, and caps of linen; but to-day, including the faces and hair of the wearers, all was of a dust colour. These men have evidently been long on the march. Passing General Jorenoff, I stopped for a moment's chat (some of his officers speaking French).

It is said that this man's fame as conqueror of the Pamirs was acquired in a fashion scarcely to his credit. A small Afghan fort, on Afghan territory, guarded by a mere handful of soldiers, was summoned by him to surrender, which they refused to do, stating that they were in their own fort and on their own territory; that they had been ordered to remain, and would be shot if they disobeyed the order. Jorenoff replied that they would be promptly shot if they did not, and slaughtered they were. The Russian force outnumbered the Afghans many

times over, and it was a time of peace. So, at least, I am told from one who has many friends in St. Petersburg; and as I sat this morning on my horse and gazed into the cold, cruel-looking face of this commander so beloved by the Government, I could well believe that he would allow nothing to stand long between himself and his advancement. His light blue eyes gleamed with a friendly glance on me, but cruelty deep and awful lay behind their smiles. However, he was dealing with a band of cutthroats. While we were talking the shadows lengthened as the day departed — the valleys darkened, and only the higher snow-peaks gleamed in the upper air. All the soldiers had formed in two long lines, stretching far up and down the valley, while their General and his staff had taken their places before the centre. As the light faded and faded away every head was uncovered and face uplifted as the whole army chanted the national anthem. Other nations sing of their own glory or to their rulers, but that was a hymn to God—so solemn, so majestic, that the very mountains seemed to stand at attention and the light to pause in its departure, listening. As the last notes rolled upward in the still air, the day ended, and the eastern army of Russia moved quietly off into the shadows. Jorenoff and his staff waited until all were gone, and then, with a salute in my direction, passed away to the southward.

I could not but wonder, as I watched him disappear up the defile, what record would mark the passage of these bright summer months in the Pamirs. The shooting down of another handful of Afghans, perhaps the moving his soldiers rapidly from point to

point of that desolate land, and the sending of high-sounding reports to the great White Czar, followed by the receiving therefor further honours and greater rank? Very likely. In the meantime, what is Russia doing for the great cause of civilisation and enlightenment in these provinces of Central Asia?

It is about twenty-five years since she laid her hand on this land of Turkestan, and it is now entirely possible to travel from end to end of it in safety, both as to life and property. Near each and every native town of any importance she has built a Russian one, perfected irrigation, planted trees, caused the wilderness to "blossom like the rose." There are many schools, where the natives are taught the Russian tongue. She has built a railroad through the terrible Black Sand Desert, almost to the gates of Osh, and that picturesque terror, the tarantass, has vanished into the more remote regions. We entered it at Samarkand, and five days later we alighted at "Osh" in fragments, having, during all the five hundred versts, envied that great two-wheeled cart, the arba, as it rolled so smoothly though so slowly along. My heavy tin boxes were split and cracked and polished clean of paint by the terrible motion, and my patience reduced to like condition through long delays at post-houses. In Osh, I watched with interest the high court of justice. To the presence of the governor the suppliants were ushered one by one. But short audiences were given to any of them; most were scarcely allowed to finish what they had to say; all were hustled away, generally carrying "No" as an answer to their petitions. These Sarts are cheerful-natured,

and take the ruling of their Western masters in a most philosophical manner. I do not think one of the entire lot that day got what he wanted. Yet none seemed greatly to mind it, or perhaps they have early learned the uselessness of opposition. Russia forces them to live at peace with the world and each other, a thing they certainly would not otherwise do. These people will be for ever made to feel that they are conquered. The very arrangement of the cities must impress that fact upon the natives. At each and all of the great points and larger towns, the native portions are entirely by themselves, communicating in no way with the Russian portion, and ofttimes, as in the case of Bokhara, Tashkendt, and Marghilan, three, four, and even ten miles separate them. The Russian towns are always military posts, always heavily armed and always on guard, and with such people as these of Central Asia this is necessary. To these distant provinces the Czar sends also, sometimes for life, those of his nobles or his relatives who have displeased him. Tashkendt is full of such, and is called the capital of the banished.

What comparisons one of another nation—knowing India—is forced to make as he journeys through Turkestan! True, it is perhaps unfair to make such comparison where the one nation has held control for more than a century and the other not one-fourth so long. What would be the condition of India at present had she—in 1857 — been under the dominion of Russia and risen in mutiny against the Czar? Would you find, as does the traveller of to-day in that land of the sun, every office in the hands of the

people that can be placed there? Would you, entering the great banks, railway offices, custom houses, etc., find them, as you now do, all in native hands? Would you find regiment after regiment of native soldiers? Even the mutiny only caused England to give the people more liberty. Was that wise—would it have been so under Russia? Which nation understands her natives best? Time will show.

Jorenoff's baggage train was immense, and I warrant that he travels with all luxury. No simple rice night after night, because he cannot eat mutton eternally. Nor would there have been for me, had I in any way understood the resources, or lack thereof, of the land.

While I am on this subject, it would perhaps be well to give a word of advice to those who may follow, and also a short explanation of the tours. As for the season, one should leave Osh not later than June 1st. That will make the journey over the desert quite pleasant. I do not consider a journey to St. Petersburg as at all necessary. If you go to Odessa and send your passports to the capital, our minister can do it all without your aid. Then, when you are assured that permission has been granted, telegraph yourself to the governor of Askhabad, and ask whether you will be permitted to enter at Krasnovodsk. Pay three prices for your telegram, and also for the response. In such cases your message is given precedence over all others, and you will receive your reply in a few hours. If it is favourable, then go ahead; and if the police at Krasnovodsk refuse you an entrance, show that telegram, as I did, and demand that they wire at

once to Askhabad. That will force their hands. They are simply trying to bluff you, as they did in my case. You have all day in which to do this. Once on the train, there will be no more trouble; and if you take the precaution to procure some letters of introduction (and even if not) you will be treated with a hospitality—by the powers that rule—to which you are unaccustomed at home, no matter where you live. I do not mean in splendour—Turkestan is too remote for that—but a hospitality in which one feels that with the bread and salt is also given a true and warm welcome. Witness that extended me, who certainly had no claim upon him, by Colonel Grombschefsky at Osh. He was indeed a good Samaritan, and I have no doubt, when I reach there again day after to-morrow, that his hand, his heart, and his table will be open and at my service. So much for getting into the land. Now for the route.

The most interesting is *via* Odessa, Batoum, and Baku, unless one happens to be in St. Petersburg, when the shorter route, and at all times the quickest, is *via* rail to Baku and thence to Krasnovodsk. Your provisions and luggage for Turkestan can be sent by sea direct from New York to Batoum, and I strongly recommend a supply of the former if you are going into the mountains. There is a peculiar prejudice against all canned goods in Russia, and you will find, unless you take them with you, which will cost but little, that you will suffer from the lack thereof. I do not mean luxuries or fancy articles, but the necessaries of life. You can get none of these in Turkestan. We did find a few cans of

salmon and venison, but of inferior make, often spoiled, always greasy. In the mountains and on the plains, you will find absolutely nothing save mutton and tea. As for clothing, you will need both light and heavy. If you go to the Pamirs, a fur overcoat suitable for the purpose can be purchased very cheaply at Osh; and at Samarkand, all the blankets and heavy covering one may need. There is no trouble about the very necessary cognac until you reach Kashgar. That is always on hand in every Russian town. Of course, if you are going on such a tour as our countrymen from St. Louis made on their bicycles, you can take nothing, and must put up with what the countries afford; but I see no merit in depriving oneself of the necessities of life when there is absolutely no need for so doing, and when they can be carried so cheaply.

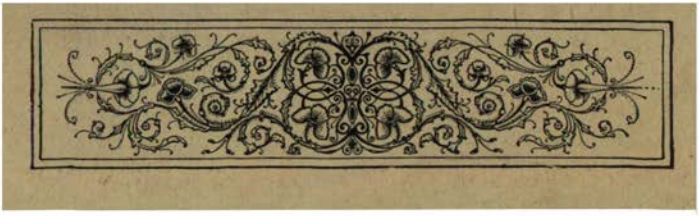
At Akbosaga, I learn to my sorrow that Colonel Grombschefsky is *en route* to the mountains to inspect the roads, etc. This is bad news for me, as Osh is nothing without him. I had looked forward to the meeting with much pleasure, and, as matters turned out, was not doomed to entire disappointment. As I descended the last pass to this place, Langar, I found him asleep in his yourt, and his numerous attendants occupied in like manner outside. He did what he could, and it was a great deal, to make my visit to Osh pleasant. He sent me direct to the Club, so that a repetition of that post-house visit was avoided.

Colonel Grombschefsky, I discovered, though not from himself, is a Pole. He is one of the finest specimens of manhood and of a soldier that I

have ever met with, is faithful to Russia in every thought and feeling, and will add lustre to her name of an enduring quality. I bade him farewell with regret, and turned again and again to wave an adieu and watch his white coat as it vanished into a mere speck in the distant landscape.

Upon arrival at Osh, I found comfortable quarters at the Club, but the emptiness and loneliness thereof was something appalling. Numbers of rooms, saloons, billiard and dancing halls, and a theatre, but no one to occupy them save myself and one officer, who sleeps all day. The town is as lonely as the Club. You may walk her streets for hours and see no one save some pale-faced women staring at you through the dusty panes of some window. I find even my fat hostess at the post-house has vanished —"been turned out." So I make speed to get away eastward, though it is with great regret that I leave the cool winds of the mountains for the hot plains below. Our tarantass we sold, and it has been resold and is gone; so I am forced to take one from the post as far as Marghilan, fifty versts. The vehicle is horrible and the ride appalling. The less said about it the better.





CHAPTER XXXVI

A RACE TO SAMARKAND—THE TABLETS OF TAMERLANE

WHILE in Marghilan I thought, in view of my recent illness, that I would ask the governor for a "podorozhnaya," and I did so. He not only promised it, but also insisted upon my taking his own tarantass, to which I objected most strongly. However, he insisted, and I consented, thanking him many times. I returned to my hotel to prepare for an early start after the midday meal. I had not been there an hour when his Excellency appeared and withdrew not only his offer of the tarantass—as his wife desired to use it—but also of the podorozhnaya, for which "You have no need; besides, I have promised one to a doctor who is taking his sister to Samarkand *for a visit*." I did not desire his tarantass, and his reasons were for that sufficient; but, knowing that I had been ill, and was scarce well as yet, to withdraw the podorozhnaya made me wrathy, and I determined that, no matter what papers he carried, I would arrive in Samarkand ahead of that doctor!

I speedily secured the services of the hotel-keeper

and started out to buy a tarantass, which I succeeded in doing very shortly. Of course the Sart, knowing my necessity, made me pay for it, but the "very high charge" of seventy-five roubles ($37.50) had to be endured. Two hours were needed to put it in condition, but by 5 P.M. I was rattling through the streets of Marghilan, having bade farewell to the little policeman who spoke such good English and desired so greatly to come with me. Early in life he had run away to sea, and, landing in Halifax, had learned our tongue, a fact which makes him constantly an object of suspicion to his governor. I telegraphed to this governor of Marghilan from Osh, asking if I might take the youth through to Kashgar with me, in case I decided to go there. The result was, to me, a curt refusal, and to him a threatened arrest. Why, is more than I can tell. So he cannot come now, and watches me wistfully as I roll away to the outer world. I am informed later that the governor fears he would never return and his family would then be a charge on the State. The doctor and his sister are to start during the evening. Something must have delayed them, as they did not overtake me until I was moving out of the post-house two stages of thirty-two versts only eastward. It is raining this morning, a thing almost unknown in Turkestan in summer. I have been singularly fortunate in the matter of weather. It has been cool and cloudy, and if this continues I shall not have a hard ride over the numerous deserts between here and the Caspian Sea. I have seen my enemy several times, but the silver key has worked so far and he gets my dust.

KHOJEND, July 21st.

The good weather—*i. e.*, clouds and showers—is still with me. All day yesterday was cloudy, with light showers, which at night increased to a heavy rain, and by midnight, when we reached Khojend, its downpour was so steady that I was forced, on Rachmed's account—he rides outside—to lie over for four hours. To-day opens cloudy, and this usual furnace is cool and pleasant. The entire ride from Khojend to Jizak is a pleasant one, and far more interesting than that *via* Tashkendt. One is on the first rise of the mountains all the way, and thereby avoids the desert entirely. The ride was without incident save that I had to invest a fortune of two dollars on a post-keeper for horses.

Good luck in the matter of weather deserts us at Jizak. We reach there at 4 P.M., to find everything held in abeyance for the passage of the post. I wish I could in any way or degree make you understand the terrible filth and dirt of these Turkestan post-houses. This one at Jizak rivals the others. Imagine a square inclosure of mud walls some hundreds of feet in extent, on one side the stalls, on the other the post-house, which is generally a low, white structure, full of filth and flies. The square itself is a mass of accumulated manure, bits of harness, broken-down tarantasses, mangy dogs, and what appear to be bundles of rags, that may at one time have served as bedding. Nothing human in sight at first, but a vigorous calling evolves these bundles of rags into men and women and many children. Out of one of them come the postman and his wife, not so much ragged as utterly vile with old filth.

They have simply brought out an old comforter, and, dropping it any place, on filth or otherwise, gone sound asleep. As to intellect, they are but little above the dogs that sleep on top of them. It would not be possible for such a state of degradation to be found in our country, even amongst the lowest negroes. In the midst of such vileness we waited for hours. I tried my best to bribe the postman,—even got him gloriously drunk, him and a crazy Jew merchant, who tried to make me drink his tea,—but all to no effect. I "must wait," and while I waited in rolled my enemy, who grinned when he saw me. Victory was his, he felt sure, as he flourished that odious paper—but he reckoned without his host, without Rachmed, and without the underpostman. Suffice it to say that I got off ahead and did not start from the courtyard of the post, also that it did not cost very much either. We had proceeded but a short distance when we were enveloped in such clouds of dust that my driver was forced to slow up now and then like a ship in a fog.

Shortly after leaving Jizak, the road enters the narrow defile of Jitan-uti, supposed to be greatly infested with serpents. Through it, in days of old, the hordes of Mongols and Tartar savages obtained access to the fertile valley of the Zarafshan; and high on the right, where the defile is narrowed, one sees the so-called Tablets of Tamerlane, though neither of them bears the name of that conqueror. One is shaped like an old-fashioned headstone, round at the top, while the other is square. The inscriptions are in Persian, and state that: "With the help of God the Lord, the great Sultan, con-

queror of kings and nations, shadow of God on earth, the support of the decisions of the *Sunna* and of the divine law, the ruler and aid of the faith, Ulug Bek Gurugan—may God prolong the time of his reign and rule!—undertook a campaign into the country of the Mongols, and returned from this nation and these countries uninjured, in the year 828 (A.D. 1425)."

The Ulug Bek mentioned was grandson to Tamerlane, and the founder of Samarkand's observatories and colleges. The second inscription is of the victory of Abdullah Khan, a century and a half later: "Let passers in the waste and travellers on land and water know, that in the year 979 (A.D. 1571), there was a conflict between the army of the lieutenant of the Khalifate, the shadow of the Almighty, the great Khakan Abdullah Khan, son of Iskinder Khan, consisting of thirty thousand men of war, and the army of Dervish Khan and Baba Khan and other sons of Barak Khan. In this army there were fifty relatives of the Sultan and four hundred thousand fighting men from Turkestan, Tashkendt, Ferghana, and Deshia Keptchak. The army of the Sovereign, by the fortunate conjunction of the stars, gained the victory, having conquered the above mentioned Sultans, and gave to death so many of them that, from the people who were killed in the fight and after being taken prisoners, during the course of one month, blood ran on the surface of this river to Jizak. Let this be known."

One cannot but feel that all that had and still has something to do with the present filth of Jizak; and I do not altogether object to these clouds of dust

behind us, as they shut out my last view of the filthy place. Even as I write, the dust lifts in front, and the snowy peaks beyond Samarkand sparkle in the sunlight. There, I know, are green trees, rushing waters, eternal freshness—thanks to the gold of the Zarafshan. There, also, is the conceited little postmaster, who takes such an interest in my mail that I know I only receive about half that arrives. There, again, I shall hear English, when I meet the good M. Letellier (though it will be funny English). There are some Russians who were very good to us on our way out. There I shall find Madame Metzler; and last, but not least, in her comfortable "inn" shall find a "warmest welcome" in a hot bath. Have you ever travelled day and night for a week in a tarantass? Have you ever been forced to make examination as to whether or not your bones were coming through your corduroys? If not, you can in no way understand the delight that latter prospect was to me, emerging from such a ride. Still, one learns to adapt oneself to every situation, and I have slept soundly many nights while my horses plunged wildly onward over these deserts, rocking and swaying my vehicle until, had I not been deeply imbedded therein, I should certainly have been thrown out. I awoke last night—it was bright moonlight—to find the horses apparently running away, and Rachmed violently belabouring the driver. Without waiting to inquire into the cause, I joined him in his work. He shook and I pummelled, with my cap, the stolid coachman, who held firmly to his lines and appeared to mind us not one whit. Rachmed gasped out, between attacks: "We

are lost! lost!" Those were the Famished Steppes, where next day the heat would mount to one hundred and thirty and upward! What were we to do? Away on all sides stretched the dead level. Over its surface the moonlight played strange pranks with sage-bushes withered and made skeleton-like through the awful heat by day. Solitary turtles



FAMISHED STEPPES, TURKESTAN

made stately progress, like huge black roaches, toward the horizon. The misty shadows chased each other like Tam O'Shanter's witches, and over all and through all there was a stillness as though the world were dead. Rachmed went off with the driver and one horse to search for the road, and I, alone in the tarantass in the midst of that desolation, wondered what the outcome would be, and,

wondering, passed into dreamland, where I was soon surrounded by the phantom men and beasts, wolves and savages, that have swept those plains for centuries, and with all of whom Rachmed seemed fighting in my defence. Then I awoke at Jizak, on the morning of my last day's ride in a tarantass.

Later in the day, the road became so rough that twice the tarantass broke down. Finally, when I thought, on seeing the last post before Samarkand come into view, that our woes were over, I found such a crowd of waiting vehicles that all hope of progress for at least twenty-four hours was gone. It was simply impossible to stay there. There was not even a dirty spot on which to sit down, and absolutely no chance of anything to eat. Added to this, my enemy put in his appearance and again grinned. This time, in such a crowd, and knowing I had no pass, he thought he had me sure, and so did I for a moment, but I had a decided advantage. I had no women on my hands, and, summoning Rachmed, I ordered him to get me a horse at any price and I would ride into Samarkand, leaving him to follow with the tarantass when best he could. He succeeded in his quest, and I shortly found myself *en route*, in company with some dozens of Sarts, each and every one of whom considered it his special duty to see that I got on all right. When the Zarafshan River was reached, they insisted that I dismount and enter one of the great, lumbering arbas for the passage; but, shaking them off, I pushed on and made the passage ahead of the lot, which secured me their intense admiration. It was nearly nine o'clock when I dismounted at Hotel Metzler, where I found a wel-

come, bed, bath, and dinner, which five nights in my tarantass enabled me fully to appreciate. As for the clothing which I stripped off that night, from hat to shoes,—I never saw it again.

I was bathed, dressed, had dined, and was sitting on the front steps, looking cool and delightful and holding a confab with Madame when mine enemy rolled in—that time the laugh was mine. I had beaten him by six hours, and how, was more than he could comprehend. I found him standing off now and then during the evening, while he examined me as a strange sort of animal. Gentlemen of the Russian Post Service, d—n your podorozhnayas.

My tarantass arrived in charge of Rachmed, before 10 A.M. next day, and in a short time I was offered twenty roubles for it. It cost seventy-five. I declined the offer, and left it in Madame's hands, to be disposed of as she thought best. I have just heard (September) that it is still "for sale," and will be until I return to Central Asia, I fancy.

Samarkand was very attractive, and I was greatly tempted to linger. It was cool and delightful, and the fruits were at their best. I never saw finer melons, grapes, apricots, apples, plums, or peaches; and I fancy, from what I heard, that though Turkestan may fail in many ways, she more than holds her own in regard to fruit. But all the fruit in the Garden of Eden could not have kept me from a start westward in the train that left at 8 P.M., especially as I found I would have an American for a companion as far as Askhabad. Even the prospect of great heat in the desert was ignored, and I started once more westward. Madame again was *désolée*,

and gave me two small chickens as a parting gift. Rachmed did not demand more than his wages, and seemed deeply grateful for the small present I made him. I also gave him a note of commendation. He has been made intensely conceited by having been brought so prominently before the world in his trips with famous people, and charges for said fame. I paid him one hundred and twenty-five roubles per month, which was double his worth. He would be a good under-servant in a camp, but that is all; and he seems to possess absolutely no memory—your orders must be reiterated each day. But enough of Rachmed. He was very kind during my illness, and for that I am deeply grateful. *Vale* Rachmed, enter Casimir, who has been patronising Madame during my absence upcountry.





CHAPTER XXXVII

ANCIENT MERV

ANYTHING that moves by steam is marvellous to one after the slower tarantass; and how luxuriously smooth and comfortable these old, worn-out carriages appear! What a superb affair that whitewashed freight-car that does duty as a dining-car! One could travel to Cape Horn with such comforts. Surely, all things are comparative; at least it would seem so here, as I look back at my first impression of this same train. It is cool enough at night, and, though in our passage of the desert the thermometer mounts, in the car, to one hundred and ten (Fahr.), I do not feel it nearly so much as I have done eighty or ninety on a murky day at home, the air is so perfectly dry and healthy.

On the evening of the second day, we reach the ruins of ancient Merv, sharply and fantastically outlined against the "crimson glow of evening."

Lansdell tells us that "the valley of the Murgab was once a well-populated district, as is shown by its now ruined vineyards and deserted fields. Abbott and Shakespeare, about 1840, travelled from Herat to Merv along the Kushk and Murgab; but the country between the Murgab and Heri Rud was

unknown to science till, in 1882–3–4, M. Lessar travelled there."[1] Along the upper Murgab are the Saryk settlements of Bala Murgab and Penjdeh. Farther south the Afghan Djemshidi and Teimurs occupy the slopes of the Paropamisus. West of the Murgab to the Heri Rud there is scarcely a single inhabited point, and all the forts along the Kushk are in ruins. Even among the neighbouring natives this intermediate district is known only to the "Sidars," or leaders of robber bands, and neither caravans nor travellers have for a long time risked venturing into this district, from fear of encountering Saryk or Merv raiders.

So recently as 1883, the Baron Benoist-Méchin, in proceeding from Merv to Sarakhs, speaks of the approach to the Tejend as the most dangerous part of the route, by reason of robbers, and how he camped a few miles from the spot where an engineer and four of his Cossack escort had been recently murdered.

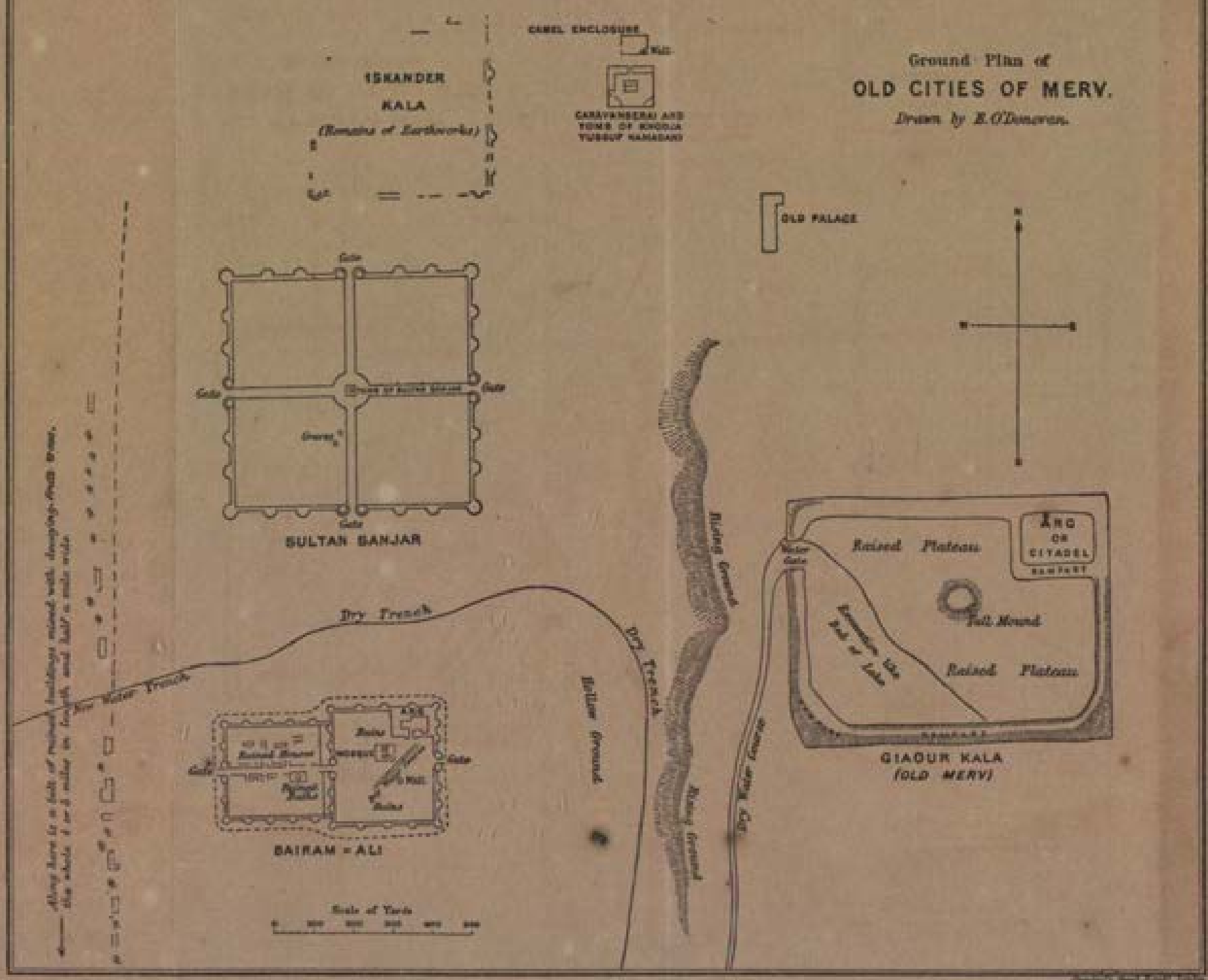
All around the Merv oasis is desert, which long served better than fortifications to protect the plundering Turkomans from retribution, whether from Persia, Afghanistan, Bokhara, or Khiva. This surrounding desert, however, varies in its nature. That to the north, north-west, and -east is sandy and arid; but the south, as I have said, is a tract of a different kind, which shows traces of irrigation in the remote past, one canal in particular, the Kara-i-ab, extending forty miles in the direction of the Tejend. This tract of country has been celebrated in Eastern history as a fertile land.

It is at Merv, Balkh (ancient Bactria), and Seistan,

[1] *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, January, 1883.

Ground Plan of
OLD CITIES OF MERV.

Drawn by E. O'Donovan.



that Iranian history begins. The Zendavesta says, "Mouru, the strong and pure," was the third land of profusion "which I, Ormuzd, have created." I observed that Turkomans with whom I came in contact, spoke of Merv as "Mowr." Merv was a flourishing city in the ancient province of Margiana, comprised in the empire of the Parthians. Alexander passed through Margiana, and Antiochus, son



MERV

of Seleucus Nicator, ruled on the Murgab. In 420 A.D. the archbishopric of Merv was made a Metropolitan See. Two centuries and a half later, the Arabs captured Merv, at which time, says Colonel Stewart, the Salor and Saryk Turkomans were in the land. From Merv, as their capital, the lieutenants of the Caliphs ruled Khorassan. Mokanna, the veiled prophet of Khorassan, began to promulgate his doctrines a century later at Merv, whence he fled to Bokhara, which khanate in 903 became the

dominant state in Central Asia, and the mistress withal of Merv. In the eleventh century, the town was surrounded by princes of the Seljuk dynasty, with stately palaces, groves, and gardens. The tomb of Sanjar Shah, who in the twelfth century conquered all the country between the Oxus and Jaxartes, still remains there in ruins. In the next century, Tului, the son of Jenghis Khan, twice took Merv, and put to death, it is said, seven hundred thousand inhabitants. This was the fourth time that the city had been desolated.

In 1505 the Uzbegs occupied the place, but were conquered five years later by the Persians. Two and a half centuries afterwards, however, the Amir of Bokhara killed the Persian governor, and again the Uzbegs gained the ascendancy. They razed the town of Merv to the ground, destroyed its dam, and, in 1794, deported forty thousand of the people to Bokhara. From this time, properly speaking, there has been no such city as Merv, and what few buildings there were, served under the Bokhariots as a place of banishment for criminals.

Merv was taken next by Mohammed Rahim (1806–26), who placed there a few Khivans, considering it an advantageous point whence to attack the Persians, and to keep in subordination the Turkomans. It was then seized by the Amir Nasr-Ullah of Bokhara, but he did not hold it long, and the Khivans once more made themselves its masters. In order to eject them the Bokhariots incited the Turkomans to attack the Khivans, which the Turkomans did, and in 1846 massacred the greater portion of their rulers.

After this the Khan of Khiva frequently led his soldiers across the desert, and laid waste the fields and pastures about Merv, but not to much purpose. The last expedition of Mohammed Emin to Merv and Sarakhs, in 1855, ended in his total defeat, and the exhibition of his head as a trophy at Teheran. After this, in 1861, a Persian army, led by Hamza-Mirza, came against the inclosure now called Merv, but the Tekkes drove back the Persians with immense loss.

Of the four towns which have existed at different epochs known as "Merv," the remains of each were said by Connolly to be distinguishable. When Abbott visited Merv, it consisted of a hundred mud huts, wherein lived a few Khivan officials. The village belonged to the Saryk Turkomans; but they were driven farther up the Murgab by the Tekkes, who began to settle in the Merv country about 1830. The Tekkes destroyed these mud huts, and in 1860 they commenced to build a large fortress, Kaushid Khan Kala, on the eastern bank of the most westerly branch of the Murgab, a walled inclosure to contain, the Tekkes said, fifty thousand tents. Accordingly, when Merv is now spoken of, Kaushid Khan Kala is meant thereby.

Abbott visited Merv in 1840. Another Englishman, Alexander Burnes, had preceded him in 1832, not to mention Dr. Wolff's first visit in the previous year. In the same year as Abbott, Shakespeare passed through Merv, travelling from Herat to Khiva, and in 1843 Sir Taylour Thompson visited the place on his way to Khiva. In 1844 Dr. Wolff a second time went there on his journey to and

from Bokhara, but after this no Englishman went to the place for nearly forty years.

O'Donovan was at Merv in 1880 and made the map which is included in this work and which I found of great service when I visited the ruins.

The glaring hot day draws to its close as our train approaches the ancient city. Already the atmosphere has taken on that wonderful golden glow which in the still air of the desert heralds the approach of night and marks the passing of the sun. As I gaze from the carriage window at Bairam-Ali, as far as the eye can reach spread the ruins of the wonderful city—mile after mile of crumbling arches, tottering towers, and ruined mosques. In the clearness of this air distances are annihilated and ruins miles away are as distinctly visible as those nearer at hand. One stands awestruck as one's eye roves over the vast desolation. The silence is so intense that even the puffing engine of our train seems impressed by it and grumbles in a monotone. No sign of life in all the desolate prospect save some lonely floating vultures, and even they, turning from the desolation of Merv, soon vanish in the distance, and as they go the day departs, while from the vast ocean of black sand stretching away to the eastward far beyond the city the moon rises slowly, her coming greeted only by the demoniacal laugh of the hyena or the chattering of the jackal, while her light falls in a sad, cold way over this sepulchre of "El Sherif the Noble."

Two millions of people lived here once, and now you cannot even find their graves, while these ruins of the palaces and houses they once inhabited are

sadder than any grave. All is vanity. Truly as I gaze outward into the deepening shadows to-night I fully appreciate that all is and has ever been—vanity.

In the grey of the hours before the dawn we set out to explore the ancient city; our horses even now selecting the denser shadows and the coolest spots.

Surely one sees that Uzbeg was Merv's assassin, for when he cut its throat and destroyed its canals he shut out the water which here is life. Then the desert marched in, as the desert will ever march in where the defences are lowered for a day, and smothered Merv in its awful sands.

To-day as we ride along miles of buildings are partly or wholly covered by the fine shifting yellow sand, with no green save some ghostly sage-brush.

That Merv was a city of beauty is plainly to be seen, for here are miles of villas, each surrounded by what were high walls, which must have inclosed luxuriant gardens, such as we find to-day in the existing cities of Turkestan,—gardens where the brooks made music under the mulberry trees, and where all the fruits and flowers of the earth were in abundance.

As we approach the heart of the city these gardens —or rather what were gardens—disappear, while the streets are lined with the crumbling walls of houses closer together. Constructed of sun-dried brick they have long since mouldered into heaps of dust or formless masonry.

The walls of the city, though of the same material, were so thick and high that they are picturesque even in our day, and some of the arched

gateways are as stately as those of many European towns.

As we pass onward the ruins circle around us to the north and south. There were three cities of Merv upon this plain, and the one immediately be-



GATEWAY BAIRAM-ALI

fore us now is that of Bairam-Ali, the youngest of the three. Its embattled walls and towers stretch before us some hundreds of yards on either side, while its centre is pierced by a stately gateway and the whole protected by a moat. Passing the gate the traveller stands within a square inclosure covered with ruins, through which a street crosses towards an inner square, or rather an adjoining square,

where are the remains of the mosque and citadel, or Arg.

The plan of this Bairam-Ali is almost the same as that of Peking, but on a smaller scale, and, as in the Chinese capital, the real town is within the second square, whose walls are, I should say, some three hundred yards square and are built upon an embankment which causes them to tower above those of the outer town.

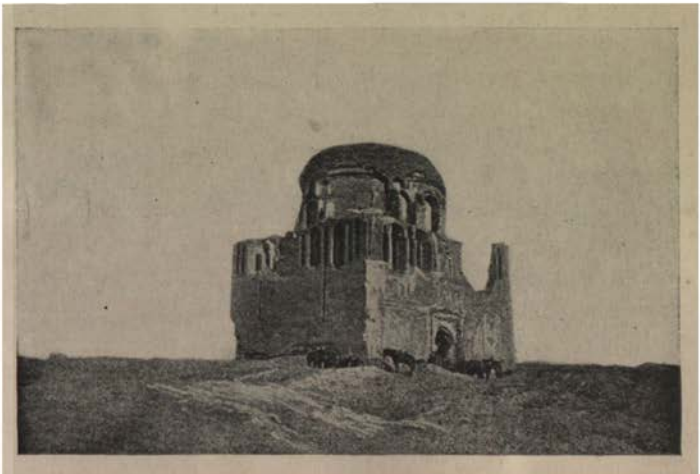
The gate by which we enter the inner city is majestic, and beyond it again the eye dwells upon chaos. The mosque which stands in its centre is the one observed from the railway station and is in fairly good preservation. Here are cloisters and a large house for the Moollahs. The citadel or Arg stands beyond this and in the corner of the city—its north-east angle—and here we find what was undoubtedly the palace of the king, three-storied in height and formerly covered with ornaments of which fragments remain. The ruined aqueducts and wells are everywhere, holding now nests of snakes and birds, while the only green thing is a creeping, thorn-like vine. Bairam-Ali Khan named this town and was its last defender. He was killed in 1784, when the Begge Jan of Bokhara overwhelmed the place.

The oldest of Merv cities—Giaour Kala—lies a thousand yards and more to the eastward of Bairam-Ali, to reach which we cross the irrigation canal. Great earth ramparts surround Giaour Kala, and as the ground upon which this town is placed rises to the northward, its southern side towers above the surrounding valley like the holy city of Jerusalem.

Here the ramparts to the south are seventy feet in height and slope inward. The walls of Giaour Kala form a square of one thousand yards on a side, I should judge, and within their inclosure the traveller will notice what was once a large reservoir for storing water. Here, again, is the Arg, or citadel, in the north-east angle. Giaour Kala is the oldest of Merv's cities and has been a ruin for fifteen hundred years, having been destroyed by the hosts of Omar the Arab. It is so old that time, heat, and tempest have driven its buildings back into the earth from which they were erected, and, as in the case of Rages, there remains little save heaps of brightly coloured bits of porcelain and the traces of a few towers. The prospect from these ramparts is depressing in the extreme. Ruins, ruins, mile on mile, while, beyond, the billowy sands of the desert appear to be racing inward from all around to render the destruction complete and final, to wipe every vestige from the surface of the earth. We visit the ruins of countless mosques and palaces in the other sections of the plain and pause for a while at a caravansary where some hundreds of camels are resting in preparation for the passage of the black sands to Bokhara, as this is the last rest-house between Merv and the Oxus.

There is a small mosque and a tomb within this inclosure, and the whole city is as dirty and wretched as these places usually are in the Orient. Leaving it we pass on to the city of Sultan Sanjar, our last point of interest, which lies to the westward of the caravansary. It is said to have been destroyed by the son of Jenghis Khan in 1221. Still, its walls

are in good preservation and are some seven hundred yards on each side of the square. It is evident that portions of the town have been occupied at a much later date than 1200. Within the walls ruin reigns supreme, save with the exception of the mausoleum of the Sultan, which occupies the exact centre of the inclosure. Here is evidenced the Turkoman's belief in the existence of buried treasures in all these



TOMB OF SULTAN SANJAR, MERV

ruined cities. The entire inclosure is full of the pits and holes excavated in the search for gold and jewels which are never found. We are not above looking for Captain Kidd's treasures in our own lands.

The tomb of Sanjar is a local Mecca for all the faithful who pass this way. It is still a stately structure some forty feet square and seventy in height, and traces of the arabesque are to be seen.

The tomb occupies the central point under the dome and was once of stone, but now of plastered mud.

As we leave the mausoleum and ride away we observe two large piles of stone to which every devout Turkoman adds another. These are the graves of the enemies of the Sultan. It was all so long ago that nothing matters now to these dead men, whoever they were. But it is getting too hot to be from under cover, and we gallop our horses back to the station and there spend the time in sleep until the train glides in from Bokhara and bears us westward and away from Merv, the queen of the world.

If all these cities were all occupied at one time one might form some idea of the density of the population during that period, but if, as I strongly suspect, one town was deserted *en masse* for a newer neighbour, then the estimation of the ancient population is greatly exaggerated.

The oasis of Merv consists of a spot in these limitless sands, about forty miles in length and breadth, which the river Murgab divides into two equal parts. Where that stream enters the oasis an immense dam stores its precious fluid, which, by the means of canals, is distributed all over the land. There are forty-eight of these main canals and hundreds of smaller ones forming a network, and so far as the water reaches there is green grass—there is life—but where it stops the desert comes down, sharply casting the pall of its death over all beyond. When Bokhara conquered this land a century ago she cut this canal at its source, and old Merv shrivelled and dried up, becoming the acme of desolation which we see it to-day.

With Merv, as with all these ruined cities of Persia and Turkomania, there is nothing of interest in the interior or in the details of her ruins. The beauty of the temples and mosques of India is lacking here. As at Samarkand, the ornamentations are confined to the façades and domes; inside all is plain to severity, and there are no inscriptions to study. So that the most interesting view is that obtained from the railway train, when all the vast extent of the several cities lies spread out before you. Then in the clear, sparkling air of the desert there is a semblance of life over all; and yet all is so deathly still, so indescribably desolate, with a desolation which fascinates and is intolerable! How oppressing is such a panorama! How it saddens the heart! How the great auctioneer, Time, has sold and is selling us all,—for ever sounding the fatal knell—"going, going, gone!"

In marked contrast to the bloody scenes at Goek Tepe was the peaceful annexation of Merv: Merv the mysterious, Merv the robber stronghold, Merv the centre of almost all the romance and legends of this land, was captured by the forces of Russia with scarce a blow.

First, commercial relations were established,—the Russian merchants at all times spying out the oasis until it had been surveyed from end to end. Then secret negotiations were entered into with the most powerful chieftains, and money was freely used, and finally, in 1884, General Alikhanoff appeared and demanded the surrender of the oasis to the Czar. This was promptly acceded to, and Merv ceased to be Merv the mysterious.

A few years passed and the first train steamed into the new town, reducing her to merely a commonplace station, though of importance in trade, as an active commerce is kept up with Persia and Afghanistan. The population of the modern town amounts to-day to some twenty-five thousand—here all trains come to a halt, but in the ancient city the express will not even stop, but with a shrill blast of its engine dismisses her to her dreams and rushes onward to where the pulse of life still beats, and death seems not so ever-present.





CHAPTER XXXVIII

MODERN MERV AND ASKHABAD

MODERN Merv, the Russian section, follows the established plan of vastly wide streets, bordered on either side by rows of trees and low, one-storied houses—houses just like those in every other provincial town or city of the vast Russian Empire—perfectly plain square wooden structures, generally painted white or pink and possessing a door and four windows across the front. Picture a street lined with such houses and with rows of trees, and place a green-domed church at its end, and you have a typical Russian town, and wherever Russia carries her flag she builds such a town (as a near neighbour to the native cities of the countries which she annexes). I doubt not that she expects to build such just outside of Herat, towards which city, from Merv, up the banks of the Murgab River, she is now building a railroad, and up that road we are not allowed to travel.

Some years ago I was taken to task by a critic in my own land because I stated that Jenghis Khan had passed by Merv. Several authorities state such to have been the case. His armies under his son certainly were here as Merv knew to her sorrow.

He himself was in Georgia. How did he get there? That he was at Bokhara there is no doubt. That he must have turned his eyes with longing upon the rich oasis of Merv with its teeming cities there is scarcely a doubt. It was but one hundred and fifty miles away—over the desert, it is true—but the hordes of those days did not dread the desert, as was proven by the descent of the armies of Bokhara over the same desert. That once passed, the route to Georgia was an easy one—all along the foothills of the mountains where water was plenty and grass abundant, while the land, to the gates of Tiflis, was full of rich towns and villages. This was the only route, to my thinking, and I believe any student of the map will agree with me. To have passed west from Bokhara meant not only the desert, but the impassable morasses of the two great rivers, the Amu Daria and Syr Daria; meant the cold of the north, the almost impassable Caucasus with its wild tribes; meant a disaster such as Napoleon suffered in Russia; meant an unknown land. Therefore if he came, as we know he did, to Georgia, he certainly passed south from Bokhara to Merv, and thence south-westward over the ancient caravan routes and so north-westward through Persia until the rich valleys of Georgia gladdened his eyes and filled his pockets.

As our train moves westward I notice many of those quaint-looking little Turkoman towers of defence here and there over the desert. Built of mud, they are high enough to hold a man standing upright, and have no entrance save a hole near the base, through which the occupant crawls. He is

supplied with rocks inside to close the entrance and for use as weapons, and when once he has entered is comparatively safe, as the sun turns the mud almost to stone. These plains of Turkestan are dotted with ruined cities. We are passing another, quite as extensive as old Merv, and with several very stately mosques rising above the general ruin.

Askhabad is reached at noon the second day. Around the place will for ever hang the memory of that dreadful visitation of cholera, years since. Some of the scenes, though terrible, were romantic, and one could have been taken as the original of Poe's *Mask of the Red Death.* The pestilence was supposed to have passed on its way, after leaving its five thousand dead. General Kuropatkin, in very desperation at the gloom, concluded on the Emperor's birthday to give a banquet. Gay was the event, but before another sun had set nearly every soul who had attended was dead. The cholera had returned, and each and all, from the highest guest to the most humble musician, had bowed before its awful presence. Six hundred soldiers perished with the pestilence.

Askhabad is a modern Russian town of no special interest, but I notice some miles to the eastward an entire city, walled and almost perfect, but silent and deserted. Above it rise the arches of a great ruined mosque, but human life has left it long ago.

It is with a feeling of relief that I first catch sight of the waters of the Caspian, and the little ship that receives me at Krasnovodsk seems a haven of rest. They say that Russia has plans for a vast scheme, if she ever has the money for it. She

hopes, by the union of two rivers to the north of the Caucasus, to unite the Black Sea and the Caspian, and, as the latter is eighty-five feet lower than the former, to introduce such floods of water that all the Caspian and the region round about will be covered by the excess, which must steadily rise until the level of the Black Sea be reached. Where are now useless deserts will then be a vast inland sea, which will change the entire climate of Turkestan, enabling the people to raise vast quantities of cotton, and so shut out our markets, etc. But Russia has not the money, even if it could be done; and I think it is all talk, as by such a change the entire oil regions would be destroyed, and the Empire lose the source of its greatest wealth. Therefore, Turkomania will remain a vast desert, backed by a towering range of mountains; in the former, a few oases, where man may live; in the latter, a high, cold valley, accessible only for the brief summer months.

As I look back over the whole tour, it has been a very satisfactory undertaking. Georgia was as quaint as a Quaker lady; Teheran most interesting as I saw it. To Samarkand I award the prize for interest of another description and for beauty above all others. Its climate is fine, and there is a charm peculiarly its own which one cannot describe. Tashkendt is devoid of interest, save as the military headquarters. If you prize "a dinner with the governor-general," you must go there to get it. I do not. As to Bokhara, she is the grizzly, horrible Orient, and she will haunt your sleeping hours. Her mosque is unique. I have been asked whether I did not consider that she possessed a *cachet* of

her own. Yes, most certainly I do. Merv in her desolate sadness you will never forget. Osh is a beautiful hamlet in the mountains. So much for the works of man. For those of the Great Creator, what can one say? They are grand and full of beauty, though, as in the case of the "Sable Noir," they are at times terrible. Yet that same desert was most fascinating, and I never tired of gazing at its fantastic shapes and forms, at its ever-shifting waves of sand, while I appreciated the fact that to be out there for an hour would have meant death. When one comes to the Alai Mountains, there is little to say, because no words will do them justice. Having once entered that enchanted region, the memory of its snows and rippling waters, its deep green grasses, its rocks spangled with edelweiss and forget-me-nots, its pastoral life, its peace withal, will come to you again and again like "thoughts in a dream."

Jesus was there but yesterday;
The prints of his departing feet were in the grass,
His "Peace be with you" was yet audible.





CHAPTER XXXIX

BAKU — THE TEMPLE OF ETERNAL FIRE — THE JOURNEY TO ST. PETERSBURG

AFTER the wearing railway the passage of the Caspian Sea comes like a pause in strife. Cool, calm, and beautiful, one enjoys every moment of the sail westward. Again ancient, oily Baku opens its port to receive me, and there I pass several very restful days, awaiting the departure of the express for the north. There are some places of interest still to be seen near this city: one of especial note stands some seventeen versts northward from Baku, and near the town of Sourakhaneh, the celebrated "Temple of Eternal Fire," at one time one of the most sacred spots to the Parsis. The route thither—done by train—is of the utmost dreariness,—now over the desolate foothills, and anon downward into valleys of boiling oil and stifling fumes of naphtha. Add to this a tempest of wind and dust and you may understand how desolate a journey around Baku may be. The village near the temple is Tartar, and all the arched plateau where it stands seems a vast reservoir for the concentration of gas and oil. The naphtha escapes by thousands of fissures and in places is easily ignited.

Alas for romance and poetry! the "Temple of Eternal Fire" is now in the midst of a huge refinery of naphtha belonging to the Kokoreff Brothers. Surely the name holds no resemblance to that of Zoroaster, yet the holy man of Persia would not be able to contest successfully their claim to this ancient temple of his faith. You must to-day procure a ticket to enter here. It costs you nothing. In the centre of a vast court of the refinery an immense sheaf of flame is thrown up through a column of bronze. The temple — drab-coloured or white-washed — is inclosed by a double wall which is covered by a terrace with battlements of East Indian design. All the exterior walls and battlements are perforated by conduits giving vent to the gas. In the corridor formed by the double wall are cells devised for the priests. One of these cells was a chapel with an altar reserved for the true believers. In the corner of the square court is built the house of the high priest—a kind of square tower of one story, flanked by small chimneys through which escaped the flaming gases. In the walls of the adjoining court are thirty roughly built cells for the pilgrims, over the doors of which are inscriptions carved in Persian characters. In the centre of the main square stands a dome supported on four columns of stone; its apex gives vent to the naphtha conducted thither by concealed ducts in the columns. Under another dome is a small chamber covered with defaced sculptures. Here is also an excavation in a stone terrace to which the subterranean gases have access, and where, it is said, the Guebres burned the bodies of their co-religionists.

If so, fire was not considered as sacred by that sect at that date as it is now when it cannot be polluted by a thing as unclean as a dead body. In fact, all the elements are so considered by the Parsis of to-day, hence the use of the Towers of Silence with their hideous congregation of vultures. The last high priest of this temple having been assassinated in 1864, another was sent from India a few years later, but year after year the pilgrims from India and Persia have dwindled in numbers until in 1880 the priest left to his solitude departed, ostensibly to awaken once more an interest in this holy spot, but he never returned. To-day the sacred fires are extinguished, the white-robed priest can no longer be seen encircled by the holy flames, his people are gone for ever, his faith forgotten and Mammon rules supreme in this ancient shrine.

For reasons known only to themselves the authorities start this train *de luxe* from Baku for Moscow at 1.55 A.M., a most ungodly hour, especially here, as things are managed. If the customs of Europe or America prevailed it would make little difference, as one could either remain at one's hotel until almost the hour for departure, or get into his car at a reasonable hour and go to sleep.

Yesterday I came in the afternoon to the station and purchased my ticket, getting that out of the way, and so thought I might sleep until midnight at the hotel and then depart, but to-day I am warned by mine host that that is too late an hour, that I may miss the train, and would better start about eleven. I follow his advice, and on reaching the station find the main hall in possession of at least

one hundred third-class passengers of all nationalities, each by a pile of stuff, and nearly all asleep.

The ticket offices are not yet opened, nor can luggage be registered—it was impossible to do this in the afternoon. The waiting-room for first- and second-class is also a restaurant, and reeks with the smell of cognac, cigarettes, and dirty humanity. As it is upstairs, we get also all the fumes from the main hall. However, here I sit, and off goes Casimir to attend to the luggage.

The opening of the ticket-office is apparently the occasion for a riot downstairs. There are two small windows—so small that you cannot see and can scarce hear what the seller, a woman with a weak voice, has to say. The confusion and slowness is appalling, and the mass of struggling humanity not pleasant to look at. I ask the hotel porter how a really great traffic could be managed. "Impossible, sir, utterly; I was four hours yesterday getting two gentlemen off for Tiflis." At present there is a train for that city departing three-quarters of an hour before the train for Moscow, and passengers and luggage for the latter must wait until the first train has started before they can be attended to in any way. Finally the bell for this (Tiflis) train rings, and that seething mass of humanity, laden with enormous boxes and bags, which they carry into the cars, make a wild rush for the platform and are kept in order only by kicks and blows from sundry police and porters. The waiting-room empties at the same time and the turmoil transfers itself to the platform and rages most violently for a time.

At last all are stowed away, the platform deserted,

the train in darkness—from the outside—with every one apparently gone to sleep, and for half an hour, save for the arrival of some belated traveller, dead silence rests over all, to be broken by the clang of a bell and the silent starting away of the Tiflis train.

All this while the Moscow travellers have waited, some asleep, some drinking tea. As there are not so many, and no third-class passengers, there is no rush, and Casimir appears in due course with tickets and baggage receipts, and I enter this train after two and one-half hours in the station.

We must be well under way—Baku's trembling lights vanished and tickets collected—before a move towards making our beds is made, so that it is 3 A.M. before I can retire. To a healthy man this really makes no difference, but yesterday there alighted at our hotel an old lady, bound, above all places in the world, for Persia! She was a very frail, delicate woman, and spoke not a word of any language understood in this section of the world—not even French. Casimir thought she was Spanish. With her was a slip of a girl scarce eight years old, who prattled a little French, and that was her only mode of communication with those around her. When she reaches Persia French will be of little service. And yet she went cheerfully on her way, as we all must do here, though we may growl about it afterwards.

This is an expensive trip. The distance to Petersburg is 3013 versts, a verst being about three-quarters of a mile, and costs, sleeping-car included, eighty-two roubles—fifty cents to the rouble. For my luggage, two small ship trunks and a shirt box,

I have paid about eighteen dollars. It does not seem to be the weight they are obliged to haul for you to which they object, but the place in which they haul it. If in the van, then you pay for it, but you are privileged to bring anything and everything, no matter how large, into your compartment. Those third-class passengers had bales and bundles larger than any trunk, while some were brought into this train,—first class,—quite as large. So long as it is not a trunk it is allowed.

There are three of these fast trains a week, and they are fast only in that they do not stop often. It is in the stoppages that Russian trains lose so much time. Thus the rate of speed must be materially greater than with the ordinary train, for, leaving Baku on Thursday, or rather Friday at 1.55 A.M., the traveller arrives in Petersburg Monday morning at the same moment with those who left the southern city on Tuesday. This includes a five-hour stopover in Moscow.

Morning finds us speeding along by the green waters of the Caspian, peaceful and quiet to-day, as though storms never visited them. Off to the west a low range of foothills, yellow, treeless, and desolate, the last of the Caucasus ere they sink into the sea. In this narrow space between the hills and marshes are two long streaks of metal, with the train *de luxe* for Moscow gliding over the rails, representing the result and triumph of the twentieth century, while by its side in stately progress passes a long string of camels with their turbaned drivers, gazing in wonder at our intrusion of lands sacred to the memories of departed hosts, which even now on

misty nights are said to move phantom-like over their former abiding-places.

When compared to the dwellers upon these plains, we and our boasted civilisation are but things of yesterday, or are but as a flash of lurid lightning on the darkness of an Arctic night.

After all these endeavours we have impressed our civilisation upon this earth in spots only. Europe and America are the best of those spots, but consider the rest of the earth to-day. Spain and Portugal have but fringed the continent of South America. All the nations of Europe have done but little more for Africa. The same can be said of Asia and Australia, together with the islands of the seas. Is it the survival of the fittest? Does nature war against man? For certainly what we call civilisation does not seem to hold, or this vast East would not to-day be merely the graveyard of almost forgotten races. As they passed away the land but returned to what it was before their era, and the people to what they had been. Again is it the survival of the fittest? Then are we and our ideas gigantic failures, soon to be crushed and swept away, and when this comes the race that will wander our fair land, as do these Eastern tribes this Orient, will not be such as our Northern Indians were. They belong to a *new* kind, to the freshness and sparkle, to the life and vigour, which only a new land possesses. Will not this race which will cover us up, drown us out, come from the south, from Mexico?

At Petrovsk at 11.30 A.M. the road turns westward. The marshes become wider and wider until

the Caspian has dwindled into a mere line of green on the horizon and then vanishes.

Off to the north spread the plains of Russia unbroken to the frozen ocean, while southward the hills are taking courage, now the sea has disappeared, and are mounting higher and higher until soon the long line of the jagged range of the Caucasus spreads before us. Even this short distance to the northward has changed the face of the landscape. The plains, covered with a carpet of green, shrubs in full flower, white and pink, spread away on all sides, while there is a disposition on the part of small trees to put in an appearance.

After a night's rest I called in Casimir and settled with him. Our ways part at Rostov to-morrow night. On the whole he has been satisfactory, and I fancy on a long camping tour would have been more so. Above all things he is good-natured, never sullen, and yet he is no longer young. I don't think he has robbed me any more than his position warranted. As matters turned out I really did not need him. Samuel from our Legation at Teheran would have answered every purpose, and not cost one-fourth as much. Out of Persia there have been hotel porters and others whenever needed, and Rachmed was necessary for the mountains. I owe Casimir a grudge for the purchase of that "battery *de cuisine*." To have transported it over this railway would have bankrupted me. However, it afforded us so much amusement that I cross off that debt with pleasure. It is now spread all over that Eastern land from Teheran to Constantinople. Casimir's saddle-bags simply bulge with the small articles,

and it was with great regret that he saw my bed and bedding disappear in the direction of Teheran after we reached Enzeli.

As we approach Rostov hundreds of windmills recall Holland to the memory, and the estuaries of the Sea of Azov stretch far inland on the marshes, and finally at 11.30 Rostov rises before us. The city is situated on the farther or west side of the river Don, which the train crosses on a long trestle. Built on a hill, the panorama of the far southern town is picturesque and purely Russian,—flat roofs of blue, red, and green; white churches with green domes and stately campaniles.

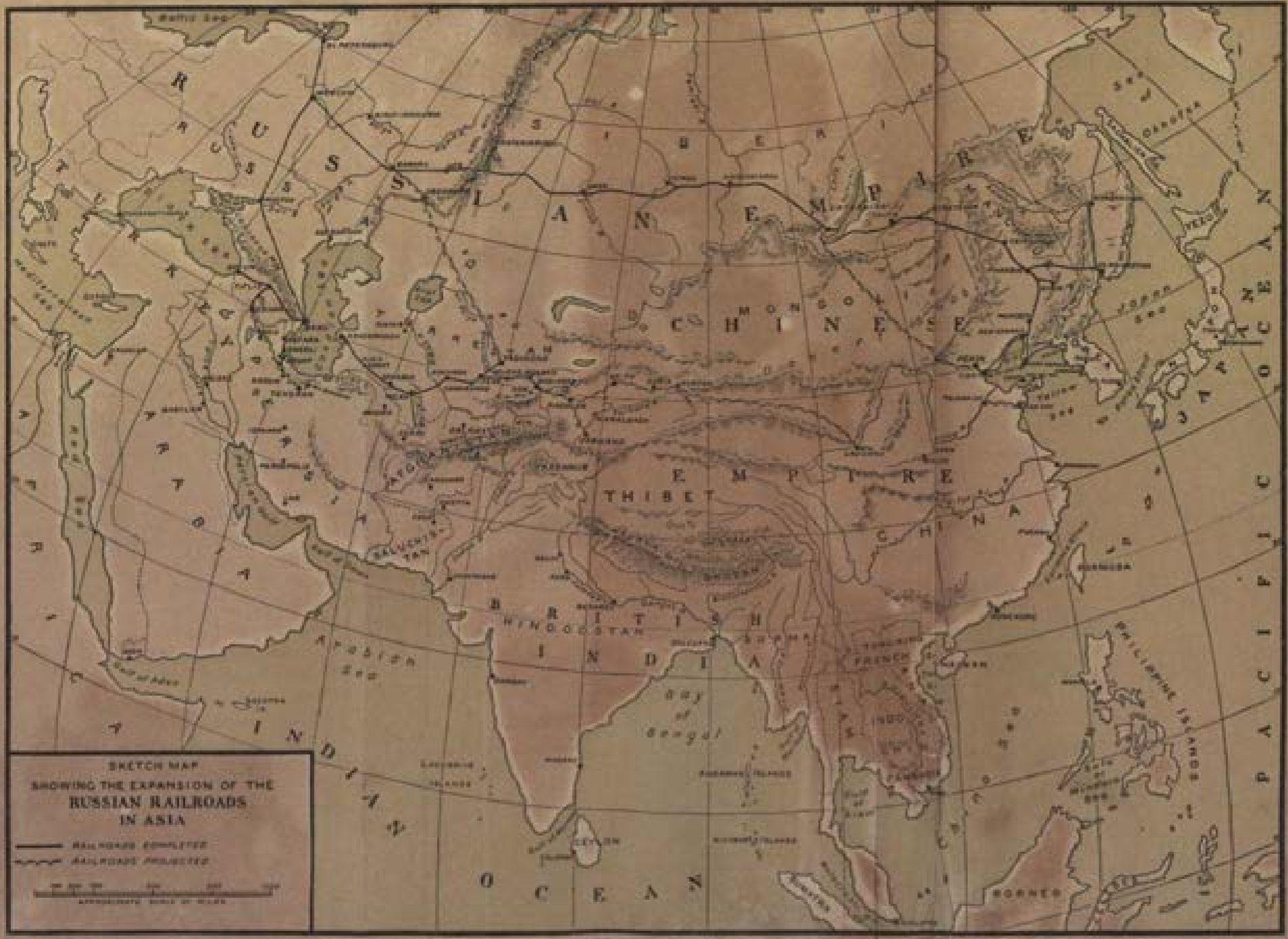
Here I bid good-bye to Casimir, and a decided feeling of loneliness settles down over me as his quaint, ugly old face vanishes for ever. It is not pleasant to be alone, and one is very much alone in Russia. Casimir goes direct to Odessa, and thence by sea to Constantinople, where he will continue to proclaim his allegiance to Denmark, a country to which he has never approached nearer than he is at present. However, he has gone, and good luck go with him! He almost went on his knees as he bade me farewell, and insisted upon kissing my hand.

Towards the evening of our last day's journey the light of the setting sun blazes on the domes of Moscow, and the ancient capital in all its Oriental gorgeousness is on view before us. The golden domes of St. Saviour's, surrounded by the many belfries of the Kremlin and the vast spread of the city, all red, green, and blue, seem to float on a sea of opals. If you would witness the progress towards enlightenment and civilisation as you look upon them, made

by the masses of this Empire, stop and walk awhile the streets of this her ancient capital; gaze into the stolid faces of the people; notice their rags and filth. Then, passing within the cathedral of the Archangel Michael, witness their adoration before the supposed coffin of Demetri, son of Ivan the Terrible, and watch them kiss the skull exposed through a hole in the pall. Then, turning your thoughts backward to those stately turbaned figures, slowly pacing with their camels the shores of the Caspian, remember their adoration directed to God alone and make your choice between them. The enlightenment in Russia to-day belongs to the middle and upper classes, and yet there is more hope from the lower class than from most Oriental races. They do not deny souls to their women; they believe in God, and you cannot describe Russia with truth and omit mention of the constant adoration of the great Jehovah by her people. High and low, rich and poor, at all hours of the day and in all places public and private, this nation are constantly bowing in silent prayer. Enter the churches and you will find them crowded with all ages and both sexes—as many men as women—can our ministers claim *that* at home?—and you have never known God worshipped in majesty until you have listened to the grand voices in a Russian cathedral or heard the national anthem chanted by thousands of soldiers as the sun goes down.

Ask the poorest of the poor here why sorrow has come down upon her and she will answer, "It is as God wills." If you ask her why her boys have all been taken to fight the nation's battles she will answer, "God and the little father think best."

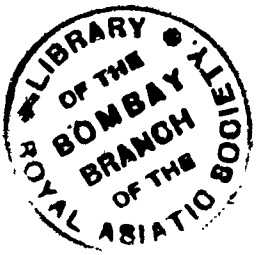
There seems to be a universal idea that Russia is priest-ridden—this is far from true. The churches belong to the people, the priests are their servants, and the lot of most Russian priests is far from happy—many of them have hard work to keep body and soul together. Neither are they held in reverence or awe in the minds of the people. These Russians are superstitious truly. The Orthodox Church has its holy icons, but the Catholic Church has also its sacred images. You hear of the miraculous power of the Virgin of Moscow and also of the holy image of Lourdes. Vast treasures belong to the shrines of both churches, but the Czar would promptly lose his throne and life if he dared interfere with the treasures of the sacred icons of Russia. Their keepers, the black monks, number in all the Empire but twelve thousand, and they are doomed to extinction by lack of recruits. As for the white or married clergy they are fewer in number—in proportion to the inhabitants—than the Christian ministers of America. Their lot is so hard that it is a wonder young men enter it. Fortunately for the Church the office is hereditary—the sons of priests becoming priests. As for this nation's adopting our Western ideas—bless you, no! Russia expects us to adopt hers—we are the unregenerate, and it is her mission to regenerate the world. As for the future, she holds an unbounded, never-failing faith that she will in the end, as surely as the sun shines, be the greatest nation on this earth. However this may be, and however our sympathies may turn for the time in this present war, we can never forget that Russia's God is our God, that she is not heathen. Therefore


RUSSIAN EMPIRE
CHINESE EMPIRE
THIBET
BRITISH INDIA
HINDOOSTAN
BURMAH
FRANCE
PERSIA
ARABIAN SEA
Bay of Bengal
INDIAN OCEAN
PACIFIC OCEAN
BORNEO
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS
SKETCH MAP
SHOWING THE EXPANSION OF THE
RUSSIAN RAILROADS
IN ASIA
RAILROADS COMPLETED
RAILROADS PROJECTED

one cannot but feel as the domes of Moscow vanish from sight that there is much hope for mankind in the future of this great Empire for "Russia is not a state; *Russia is a world.*"

As I awakened this morning the sun was rising from behind a forest of drooping pines, whose branches across his red disk resembled the tails of many wolves. Then St. Petersburg, with its magnificent avenues, its stately churches, and its plaster palaces received me once more, and the journey was ended. Perhaps, however, if you are not too weary —and we will wait here awhile—you will come with me over the Great Siberian Railway through sad Siberia and those countries of present discussion, Manchuria and Korea, until the walls of Peking loom up before us.







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